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THE TEXTILES OF MIAO WOMEN AS SOURCES OF INSPIRATION FOR CONTEMPORARY TEXTILE DESIGN AND PRODUCTION

by

NAIYU CAO ©

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN ECOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING 1994

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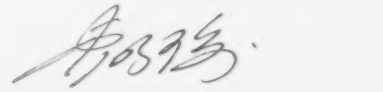
(SIGNED) 

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **THE TEXTILES OF MIAO WOMEN AS SOURCES OF INSPIRATION FOR CONTEMPORARY TEXTILE DESIGN AND PRODUCTION** submitted by NAIYU CAO in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

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ABSTRACT

Textile design motifs and techniques of the Miao people in China were used as inspiration to produce contemporary textiles. Information relating to Miao textile motifs, materials, techniques, and the social/cultural milieu of Miao textiles was examined. The role of Miao women in textile design and production was noted and the potential for producing innovative textiles based on inspiration from cross-cultural textile traditions was explored.

Miao textiles from seven provinces in southern China were chosen for the focus of this study. Textile design motifs from other Miao groups in Southeast Asia were also examined. Natural silk and cotton fabrics were selected for execution of the designs using wax resist and direct dyeing techniques. The Miao textile tradition of utilizing various tools and local materials to create extremely intricate textile designs was examined. Computer-Aided Design (CAD) technology was explored to produce some of the complex patterns and for developing a symbol library of Miao motifs.

A collection of eight textiles was produced. The finished textiles convey the style and vitality of Miao textiles. Consideration was also given to developing textiles which would appeal to a contemporary Euro-Canadian audience. The textiles produced by the researcher were confined to the use of geometric design motifs and wax resist direct dyeing

techniques. The potential for using Miao textiles as a source of inspiration for the contemporary designer is yet to be fully explored. Further projects of this sort are encouraged.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Statement of Problem

The textiles of the Miao have long attracted attention. Historians and anthropologists, as well as textile experts, have examined Miao history and social structure, traced patterns of migration of Miao tribes, documented Miao social life and artifacts, and attempted to identify Miao tradition and culture. However, the diversity of Miao culture, the lack of written historical records of the Miao, and the remoteness of Miao communities from modern society have limited the extent of studies focused on the Miao. Despite the fact that four Miao written languages have been created by linguists during the first half of 20th century, the Miao do not possess a written language tradition. Consequently, there is a limited body of literature available which describes Miao history and especially Miao textiles (China Encyclopedia, 1981; Tapp, 1986). Most Miao textile studies are based on folklore and the ethnology of the Miao. Relatively little research has been conducted which examines the production of textiles and the links of these textiles to Miao history and social life. There is also a lack of investigations focused on the use of Miao textiles as inspiration for contemporary textile design.

The significance of Miao textile tradition and the concomitant historical and social milieu need to be explored.

To do so, it is necessary to recognize that Miao textiles and clothing also function as a means of depicting history and of expressing tribal culture.

The role Miao women play in the development of Miao textile designs should not be overlooked. The fact that Miao women's textile design activities have a great impact upon Miao lives and Miao communities needs to be recognized.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this study is to examine the diversity of Miao textile designs and production and to explore the potential of utilizing these designs and production techniques as sources of inspiration to produce contemporary textiles.

Specifically, this study has the following objectives:

a) to examine the techniques, the characteristics of design motifs, and social milieu of Miao textiles;

b) to explore the potential for producing contemporary textile designs based on inspiration from traditional Miao textiles.

Justification of the Study

Although the diversity and distinctiveness of Miao textile traditions have attracted many researchers pursuing studies of Miao culture and textiles, few investigations have been conducted with respect to use Miao textiles as inspiration for contemporary textile designs. As well, no such investigations have been undertaken in the field of human

ecology and home economics.

Van Dommelen (1968) states that the objectives of art in human ecology and home economics include: to help people to identify those elements which contribute to beauty; to provide creative experiences which necessitate individual response and involvement; and to interpret aesthetic knowledge and its relation to elements of everyday living for all cultural, social, and economic groups. Van Dommelen argues that the value of including art within human ecology and home economics is that art is an integral part of everyday life. He states that aesthetic sensitivity is fundamental to full and effective living. Art in human ecology and home economics is involved with all those objectives, ideas, and philosophies which provide new dimensions to the enrichment of one's life and make the individual a more meaningful contributor to his or her personal environment.

An investigation focused on Miao textile traditions is related to Van Dommelen's stated objectives of art in human ecology and home economics by identifying elements that contribute to the characteristics and beauty of Miao textile designs. The resulting textiles will enhance the quality of the environment that they enrich. Such investigation will also interpret information and aesthetic knowledge of Miao textile traditions for a wider Euro-Canadian audience and contemporary society.

In addition, the investigation will foster a greater understanding of the creative and artistic development of Miao women in textile design activities. Moreover, with economic development and modernization of the Miao regions, the traditional ways of Miao life have begun to face challenges. For example, instead of weaving their own cloth, some Miao women now purchase ready-made plain cloth. In some regions, young people wear Western style clothes and have left their traditional costumes behind. How to modernize community life, and yet retain the best of the traditional life style, has become a common concern (Wan, 1986). The proposed investigation will serve to develop new textiles that enhance the understanding of Miao textile art and are adapted to the contemporary environment.

Limitations of the Study

This investigation focuses only on those textiles of the Miao who reside in seven provinces in Southern China: Guizhou, Hunan, Guangxi, Yunnan, Sichuan, Hubei, and Hainan. Links with the Miao of other areas in South Asia are considered briefly but Miao textiles are so rich and diverse that in no sense could one investigation of the type undertaken be considered as all-inclusive or one that embraces all design characteristics and possibilities for innovation. The textiles produced in this study represent only a part of the potential for possible textile designs based on this source

of inspiration.

The design and production methods employed in this study are limited by the availability of raw materials and equipment; by the suitability of applying traditional Miao textile production methods to contemporary textiles; and by the subjective selection on the part of the researcher of raw materials, production methods, and designs inspired by Miao textiles.

Definitions of Terms

Batik: Decorating cloth with designs using wax to cover those parts of the cloth which are to resist the dye during the dyeing process (Fraser-Lu, 1986).

Ge people: A group of the Miao minority nationality who live in southern China.

Han: The majority nationality of China. The Han, like the Yao and the Dong or the Bouyei, live close to the Miao in the southern provinces of China.

Motif: A theme or dominant, recurring visual design element, form or subject (Kwon, 1977). There are figurative, nonobjective, geometric, and auspicious motifs. A figurative motif bears strong resemblance to natural forms or objects (Bevlin, 1984). A geometric motif results from a joining of line, square, circle, or triangle. Geometric shapes have not only been invented by humans, but also exist in nature. An auspicious motif represents wishes for future success or good

luck with symbols or signs.

Tjanting tool: A tool consisting of a small, thin-walled, spouted, copper vessel which is used to apply wax prior to resist dyeing.

Traditional motifs: Indigenous motifs used traditionally. Some traditional motifs persist in contemporary textiles.

Wax knife: In China, axe-shaped tjanting tools that the Miao used are called "Waxing Knives" (Lu, 1981)(see Figure 11, page 33).

Wax resist techniques: The techniques that depend on successive applications of wax lines or masses which resist dyes in selected areas on the fabric (Proctor & Lew, 1984).

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Sociocultural Aspects of Miao Culture

The Miao form one of the oldest ethnic groups in Asia. China Encyclopedia (1981) states that more than four thousand years ago, Miao ancestors lived between the Yellow River and the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River. The Miao lived in southwest China from the Zhou Dynasty (1027-256 B.C.)(see Appendix 1), coming under Han political control during the reign of the Han emperor, Wudi, in the second century B.C. (Tapp, 1986; Lin & Zhang, 1987; Reilly, 1987). During the Qin-Han period (221 B.C.-220 A.D.), the Miao inhabited the territory known as Wuxi or the "Five Streams" region of China. This is a region where the majority of the Miao dwell today. Some Miao groups continued to migrate westward and southward reaching Southeast Asian countries such as Vietnam, Laos, Burma, and Thailand during the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368-1911 A.D.). This essentially formed the general pattern of Miao population distribution that is seen today (Campbell, 1978; Y. Lin, & F. Zhang, 1987)(Figure 1).

According to sources from the Cultural Palace of Nationalities (CPN), the Miao population in China in 1982 was 5,021,175 people, a tenth of the total population of over fifty-six minority nationalities in China. In Guizhou province alone, there are approximately three million Miao. There are

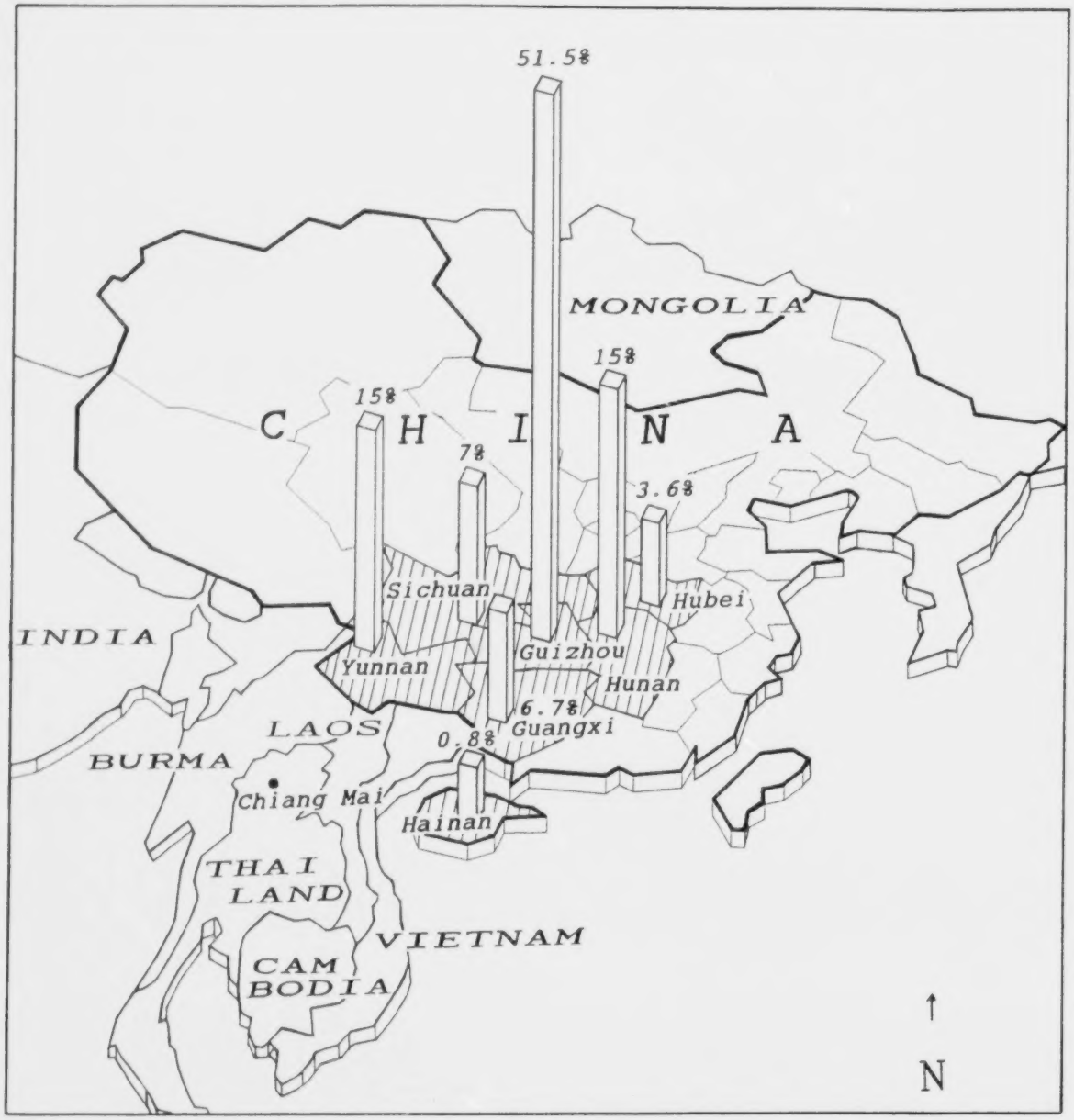


Figure 1. Distribution of Miao in China. Within China, the shaded areas indicate the seven provinces where Chinese Miao are distributed. In 1982, the Miao population in the seven provinces was 5,021,175: about 51.5% in Guizhou; over 15% in Hunan; nearly 15% in Yunnan; 7% in Sichuan; 6.7% in Guangxi; nearly 3.6% in Hubei; and 0.8% in Hainan province. There are also many Miao living in Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Burma, and Cambodia. Chiang Mai is an area in which a large number of Miao live (Drawn by Naiyu Cao, 1993).

also many Miao in Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Burma, and Cambodia. In Southeast Asia, the Miao are known as "Hmong" or "Meo" (Campbell, 1978; Cooper, 1984; Moser, 1985; Tapp, 1986).

The Miao have migrated widely. Campbell (1978) states that the Miao in the Golden Triangle area still move regularly around the triangle formed by Tak, Chiang Mai and Nan areas. Some Miao move whole villages with all their possessions every twelve to fifteen years. These migrations are attributed to war, heavy taxation, diseases, and infertility of the land (Campbell, 1978; Tapp, 1986).

Migration also appears to be a reflection of the custom of Miao ancestors. In ancient China, especially during the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties, governments were cruel and extorted excessive taxes and levies from the Miao and other peoples (Sinclair, 1987). The Miao were considered unbending and rebellious because they struggled against their oppressors (Wan, 1986). Some of the Miao stayed or were assimilated, while others recognizing that they could not change their living conditions moved southward and lived away from the central government.

This migratory life style has exerted a significant influence on Miao culture and textile traditions. The influence of migration on Miao life is twofold. First, since no exact written history was preserved and varied customs were carried by various groups of Miao inhabiting different

regions, it is unknown exactly where Miao ancestors and culture originated. Legends, myths and bits of history of the groups have been incorporated into songs, folktales, and motif symbols as such are handed down from generation to generation. These songs, folktales, and motif symbols contain references to a mysterious conception of life which has strongly affected Miao life styles, faith, culture, and textile designs (Bernatzik, 1947/1970; Graham, 1978). Second, migration has brought influences and cultural exchanges between and among the Miao and other Chinese peoples such as the Han, the Yao, the Dong, and Bouyei (Lu, 1981; Wan, 1986). While the Miao in Xiang-xi region live close to other Chinese peoples such as the Han, the Yao, the Dong, and the Bouyei, their textiles and costumes have more similarity to those of the Han, the Yao, the Dong, and the Bouyei peoples.

Today, most of the Miao groups in China have established permanent settlements and no longer migrate. They practice agriculture in mountain villages. The CPN (1985) states that although the Miao have been scattered across a wide area, they have maintained their identity as an ethnic group by living in compact communities.

Social gatherings which aid in retaining tribal culture are important aspects of Miao community life. Since the Miao normally live in hills or on lowlands near mountainous areas, life is difficult and social gatherings play significant roles

in terms of facilitating survival (Bernatzik, 1947/1970). For example, courting and harvest ceremonies depend greatly on gatherings. Gatherings offer opportunities for young women and men to find marriage partners from local villages and beyond. Grand gatherings, especially festival occasions, are a time to renew cultural solidarity through the sharing of myths and legends, and especially in ensuring good harvests and prosperity by means of religious rituals (Wan, 1986).

Most important gatherings are festive occasions. Festivals provide an opportunity to trade, exchange news, and express oneself by wearing traditional textiles and costumes. Festivals showcase the Miao cultural heritage and Miao women's creativity with respect to textile and costume designs.

The Miao have a number of traditional festivals which differ regionally. For example, in southeast Guizhou and in Guangxi, the Miao celebrate their New Year festival in the fall, while the majority of Miao in other areas, like other Chinese people, celebrate Spring Festival (Chinese New Year) which they call "Guest New Year" (China Encyclopedia, 1980, p.301). In other areas there are other galas such as the Tiaohuachang Festival, Sister Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, and Bull-fighting Contest (Chen, 1982; Xie, 1987).

One such festival which is known as "Tiaohuachang" or Dancing-Around-the-Flower-Tree Festival occurs in February. Tiaohuachang involves the playing of the Lusheng (reed pipes)

and dancing. This provides an opportunity for young men and women to get together and express their love. During this festival, traditional costumes are worn and "each dancer [wears] rolled up on his back a cotton quilt bound around with layers and layers of embroidered or batik scarves, and over his regular tunic [are] festooned colorful aprons and ribbons" (Wan, 1986, p.65). The idea is to show off the player's fiancee's craftsmanship and family wealth through their decorated costumes and textiles (Figure 2). Each time a dancer circles the symbolic "flower tree", another layer is removed from the quilt, and the clothes are changed periodically. Mothers and sweethearts supervise the removal of layers and lead the dancers off for a change of clothes. Although dancing skills attract little attention, women are attentive critics of the workmanship displayed on the textiles. Wan comments that "Each outfit showcases the owner's skill in weaving, embroidery, batik, and other textile crafts" (Wan, 1986, p.66).

Long (1986) has described Miao craftsmanship on clothing and textiles which were worn during the Autumn Festival in Huayuan county in Hunan province in 1985. The young men wore tunics buttoned down the front. Some young men wore six or seven layers of clothes with different designs and colors of fabrics. "They do up one button on the outside, three on the

Figure 2. Miao villagers examining textile designs on festival costumes (Drawn by Naiyu Cao, after "Minority lifestyles in Western Guizhou", photograph by Wan, G., 1986, *China Reconstructs, 8*, p. 66)

next and so on. The aim apparently is to show off their new clothes" (Long, 1986, p.9).

Xie (1987) describes the Sister Festival which is held at a small river town named Shidong in Taijiang county of eastern Guizhou province. Since many Miao live in remote areas where transportation is extremely difficult, they have little contact with the outside world. The remoteness of the villages in the encircling mountains confines the young women to their looms in the houses and deprives them of opportunities to meet young men from other villages. As a result the Sister Festival, which includes many events such as bull-fighting, horse-racing, and the Lusheng dance, has evolved as a grand gathering event attracting guests from afar. The young men who come from outside the village are received warmly by young women who dress in beautiful costumes and textiles which they make themselves (Xie, 1987; Rossi, 1990; McDonald, 1993).

Zhang (1981) states that when a girl falls in love, batik ribbons or kerchiefs are the first gifts she will give to her lover as a sign of her affection (also see Lu, 1981; Peng, 1983; Qiu, 1990). Peng (1983) states that during festivals, young men blowing their reed pipes approach young women to express their love. If a girl is pleased with her suitor, she will hang a silk ribbon on his reed pipe. The young man continues to play his pipes until the girl has given him her necklace and waistband. Then the couple approach the head of

the village to exchange token gifts and seal their relationship. With the seeds of love thus sown, many young women in the village soon find a mate. The courtship ceremony has been passed down from generation to generation.

Events such as horse-racing or reed-pipe playing are no more competitions, but rather, they are demonstrations of certain skills for the purpose of entertaining the young women and adding excitement to the occasion. "The young single men, of course, were closely watching the decorating of the young women" (Xie, 1987, p.33). Making and wearing unique traditional textiles remains an important method for young people to attract a desired marriage partner and textiles play a significant role in courtship rituals during the festivals (Rossi, 1990).

Miao costumes and textiles also have an important role to play in creating and maintaining a sense of tribal identity (Campbell, 1978; Rossi, 1990). Campbell (1978) states that there is tremendous pride in being a Miao, and especially being Miao from a particular village in a particular area. "Ways of [tying] the turban or stitching the jacket proclaim the wearer's background, and these tiny distinguishing features continue to be included in every costume." (Campbell, 1978, p.58). Textiles and costume are so important that most tribespeople regard them as their group cultural identity and representation of themselves.

Because of the geographical isolation and various historical factors, most Miao live in areas where the local economy is based on farming and handicrafts. These factors have helped preserve a traditional style of life with a distinctive local flavour and a wide range of unusual textile traditions (Lu, 1981; Wan, 1986; Rossi, 1990; Zeng, 1992). Festivals and other social gatherings provide the Miao with opportunities to display their new works of textile and costume designs; discuss their elaborate and creative textile techniques; and exchange new ideas. As Wan states, "Popular new designs will spread like wildfire and win fame for their creators. All-time favourites are passed down from generation to generation" (Wan, 1986, p.65).

Miao Textile Design

Textile Traditions

Miao clothing and textiles are especially rich and colourful artifacts (Bernatzik, 1947/1970; CPN, 1985; Tapp, 1986). The absence of a written language has meant that the roles of tales, songs, and textiles and clothing are important transmitters of cultural history. Miao clothing and textiles have been especially significant in this regard (China Encyclopedia, 1981; Tapp, 1986; Tapp, 1986; Den, 1991).

Utilizing Miao clothing and textiles, researchers have examined and analyzed Miao textile designs and techniques (Lu, 1981; CPN, 1985; Nationalities Affairs Commission of Guizhou

[NACG], 1987). Almost every Miao woman knows how to weave, dye, batik, embroider and appliqué textiles. A young girl begins to learn to sew and to weave at the age of seven or eight (Central Institute for Nationalities [CIN], 1956; Lu, 1981; NACG, 1987; Wang, 1990). Girls normally begin to embroider or cross-stitch by imitating the textile works of their sisters, mothers and grandmothers. When a young woman reaches marriageable age, she has commonly produced a large collection of costumes and other textiles. These form the basis of her dowry. Zhang (1981) states that the quality of the dowry is the product of the talent and skill of the young bride herself, and it reflects years of strenuous effort to develop her creative abilities (also see Bernatzik, 1947/1970; NACG, 1987). Such social customs demonstrate just how indispensable a part of everyday life textile design has become for the Miao (Zhang, 1981; NACG, 1987).

Handmade textiles are used in all aspects of daily life. Textile designs decorate satchels, aprons, backpacks, hats, shoes, leggings, waistbands, skirts, bedsheets and quilts. Lu (1981) states that Miao women draw upon the familiar and beloved wildflowers, plants, birds, and fish as the basis for their textile designs. They use such images in their textile designs to express their feelings, their imagination, and their wishes.

Textile designs have been changing and evolving in Miao

daily life but some essential features have remained unchanged (CIN, 1956; NACG, 1987). For example, patterns on Miao shoulder bags of Guizhou are greatly varied, but designs for the upper and lower bands of the bags, which symbolize the Yellow and Yangtze Rivers where Miao ancestors lived, have remained for generations as reminders of their history. The Miao consider that the upper and lower bands symbolize their history while between the designs of the two rivers are villages and fields (Li, 1985).

Textile Design Styles

The textile designs applied to Miao clothing show astonishingly great imagination and feeling for ornamentation and color composition (Bernatzik, 1947/1970; Lu, 1981). Li (1985) states that flowers and animals are the most popular design motifs used in the mountain regions, while people in the valleys use fish and shrimp in their designs. Mailey (1981) comments that Miao batik textile motifs consist of lively and graceful birds and animals, imaginative plants and flowers which are sometimes combined with motifs symbolizing peonies, longevity, emblems, cherry blossoms and pomegranates of traditional Chinese ornament reinterpreted with local flavour. Mailey suggests that T-fret and S-scroll border motifs in pressed clay tomb tiles seen as early as the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.- A.D.220) remind us of how folk art sometimes preserves very ancient motifs. Lu (1981) comments

that in some Miao textile motifs birds fly with spread wings and with feet back over their heads in the traditional Chinese manner, while other birds appear to be turning into flowers as they fly.

Some scholars have noted that Miao textile design motifs are closely linked with their history, environment and psychology (Li, 1985; Den, 1991). Proctor & Lew (1984) point out that peoples in different cultural and social contexts may create artifacts for various reasons, such as to convey symbolic meanings, cultural identification, religious beliefs, political affiliation, or as markers of status.

Textile design motifs on some Miao costume bodices in Guizhou often appear to consist of neat geometric designs, but close examination shows that they are actually varied shapes illustrating folk tales and events such as dragon boat races. Other textile motifs on the women's back collars represent images of ancient Miao army flags, drill grounds, and maps of the city (see Figure 3). They record the traditions and history of the Miao (Den, 1991).

Miao decorative designs as applied to their costumes vary according to the gender and age of the wearers. In addition, textiles signify membership among regions, provinces, counties and even stockade villages (Lam, 1985). CPN (1985) states that according to design features, the languages the wearers speak, the culture, as well as geographical locations, the various

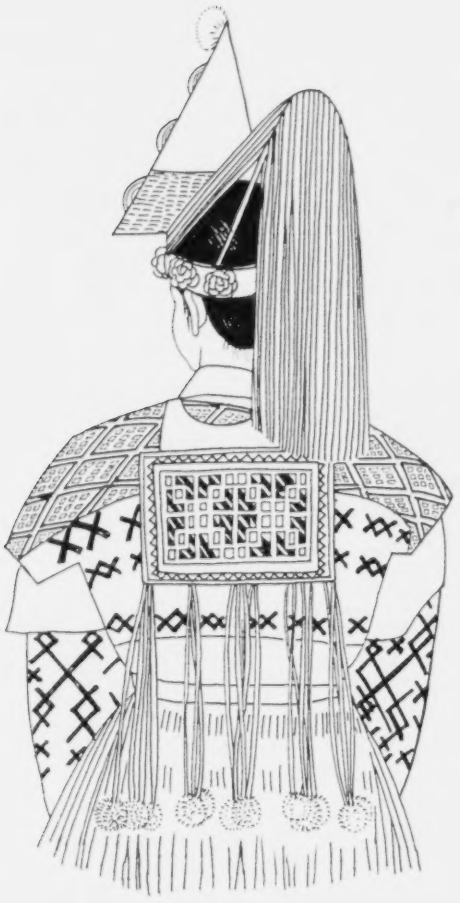


Figure 3. A Miao woman's back collar design symbolizes the images of ancient army flags, drill grounds, and maps of the city. They record the history of the Miao (Drawn by Naiyu Cao, 1994, after The clothing with ornamentation of ethnos: A cultural sign, by Den, Q., 1991, Kunming, Yunnan: People's Publishing House of Yunnan).

Miao textiles and costumes can be classified systematically into five stylistic categories. These five styles are the Xiang-xi (also called Western Hunan), the Qian-dong (Eastern Guizhou), the Qian-zhong-nan (the Mid-south Guizhou), the

Chuan-qian-dian (the Sichuan-Guizhou-Yunnan) and the Hainan styles (CPN, 1985; Lam, 1985; Y. Lin, & F. Zhang, 1987).

Textile Designs in the Xiang-xi Style

Textile designs in Xiang-xi style consist mostly of patterns of stylized flowers and birds on branches which are similar to Manchu and Han designs found on textiles and costumes produced during the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries. Many auspicious motifs are found on textiles executed in the Xiang-xi style. Pomegranate motifs signify a growing family. Motifs with phoenixes and dragons together signify a happy marriage. CPN (1985) points out that through cultural and economic exchange between the regions inhabited by the Miao and the Han, Miao textiles have apparently assimilated the characteristic features of those of the Han nationality. The bodices, cuffs, lower hems of jackets and bottoms of pants are all trimmed with layers of broad lace and embroidery patterns (CPN, 1985)(Figure 4).

Textile Designs in the Qian-dong Style

Lam (1985) states that in the Qian-dong style, textile design motifs consist chiefly of geometric forms and various animals and plants (see Figure 5). CPN (1985) states that the design motifs are modelled between material objects and geometrical themes. Motifs of dragons, phoenixes, flowers, birds, fishes and insects are stylized and used as auspicious patterns. Sometimes motifs representing legendary characters

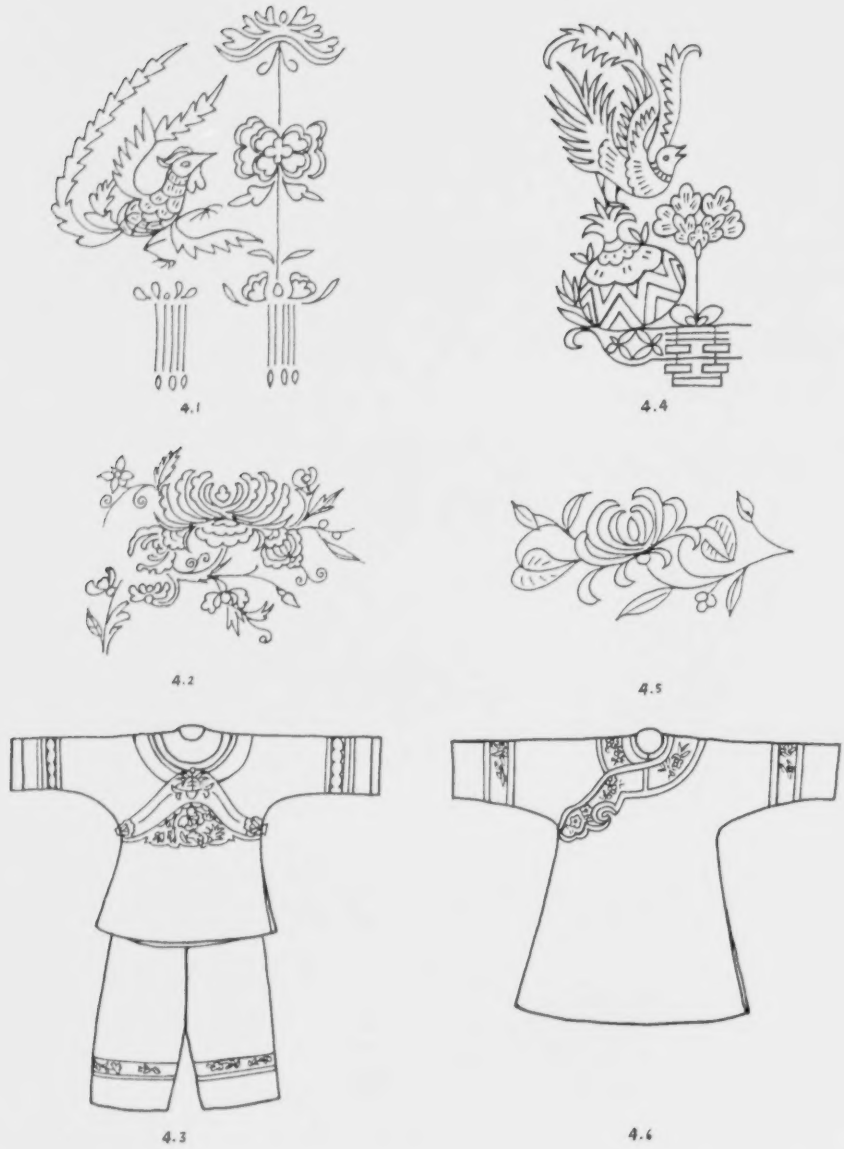


Figure 4. A comparison among Miao and Han design motifs and clothing styles. Miao motifs and costume style (Figure 4.1, 4.2 & 4.3) are similar to the design motifs and costume style of Han at the end of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911) (Figure 4.4, 4.5 & 4.6) (Drawn by Naiyu Cao, after Clothings and ornaments of China's Miao People, by CPN, 1985, Beijing: Nationality Press and Designs of Chinese indigo batik, by Lu, P., 1981, New York: Lee Publishing Group).

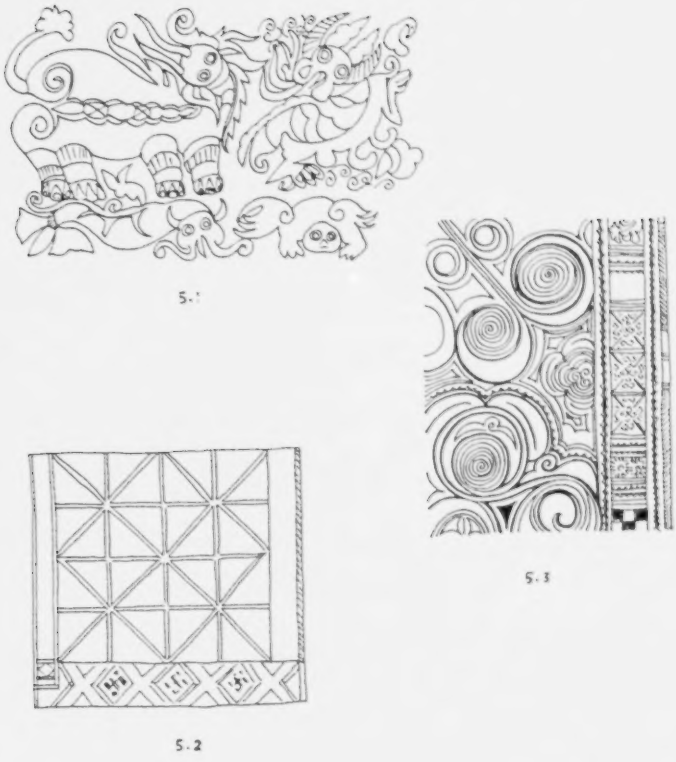


Figure 5. Textile designs in the Qian-dong style consists of geometric motifs (Figure 5.2) and stylized animal (Figure 5.1) and flower motifs (Figure 5.3)(Draw by Naiyu Cao, after Clothings and ornaments of China's Miao people, by CPN, 1985, Beijing: Nationality Press).

are woven on the waistbands (CPN, 1985; Li, 1985). Strong contrasts of black/white, red/green, and yellow/purple are common color combinations in textile designs in this style.

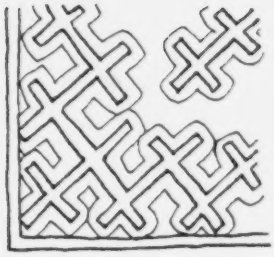
Pleated skirts are popular and the length of the skirt varies from place to place. In addition to rich embroidered decorations on their textiles, women wear a variety of silver ornaments on festival occasions (CPN, 1985; He, 1987).

Textile Designs in the Chuan-qian-dian Style

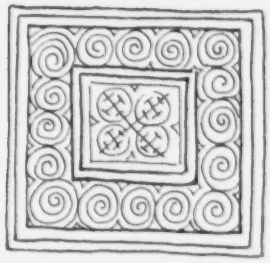
Textile designs in the Chuan-qian-dian style consist mostly of geometric motifs (Figure 6). Textiles executed in this style usually utilize more symmetrical and allover compositions as compared to other Miao textile design styles. The geometric motifs normally are structured and intricate and in combinations of black, red, yellow, and white. Larsen (1976) states that Miao indigo dyed batik fabrics with geometric patterning are embellished by using colorful appliqué and embroidery.

CPN (1985) states that women's pleated skirts are made with several pieces of batik and embroidered fabrics. Many Miao women wear back collars which show various geometric motifs (see Figure 3, page 20). The sleeves of the men's robes are large and wide and trimmed with a batik cuff (Figure 7). Men also wear a floral shawl and floral sleeved jacket the same as the women.

Textiles of the Chuan-qian-dian style in Yunnan province are identical to textiles of the Miao in Thailand, Burma, and Laos (see Figure 8)(Campbell, 1978; Lam, 1985; CPN, 1985; Lewis & Lewis, 1986; Kanomi, 1990). There are some prominent appliqué motifs such as the star, snailhouse, elephant's foot, and heart. The star motif consists of an eight-pointed star at the center of the design with a varying number of concentric eight-pointed star-shaped channels radiating out to the border.



6.1



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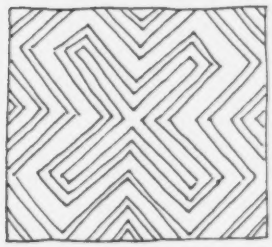

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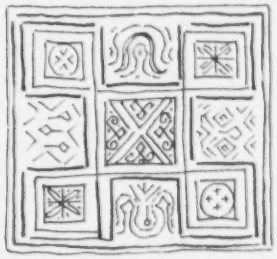

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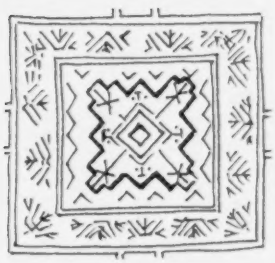

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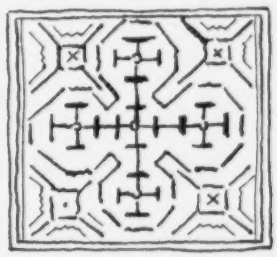

6.6

Figure 6. Chuan-qian-dian textiles mostly depict geometric motifs. These motifs are often found in appliqué and reverse appliqué (Figure 6.1, 6.4 & 6.5), embroidery (Figure 6.2 & 6.3), and batik (Figure 6.6) textiles and costumes (Drawn by Naiyu Cao, after Clothings and ornaments of China's Miao people, by CPN. 1985).

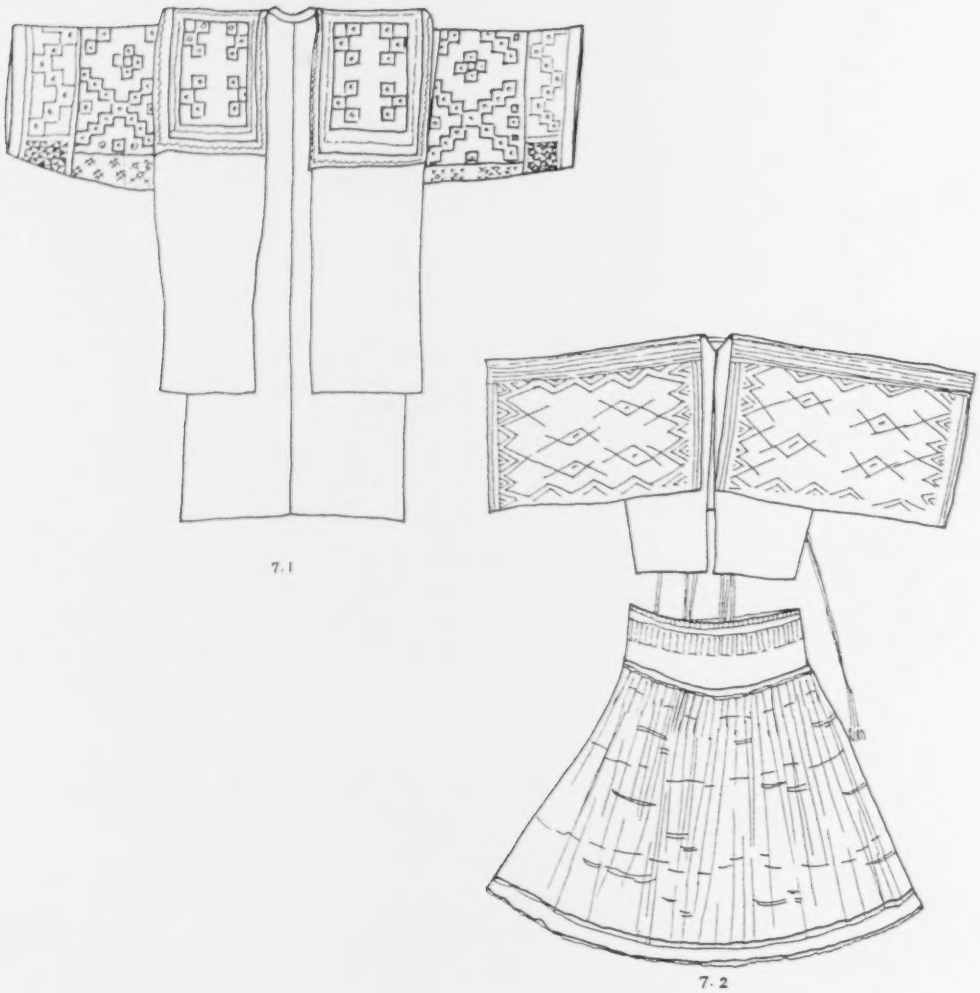

Figure 7. Miao men's jacket (Figure 7.1) and women's clothing (Figure 7.2) from the Chuan-qian-dian Style. This costume style is characterized by a large size shawl decorated with bold patterns which are further highlighted by a strongly contrasted colors (Drawn by Naiyu Cao, 1993, after Clothings and ornaments of China's Miao People, by CPN. 1985).

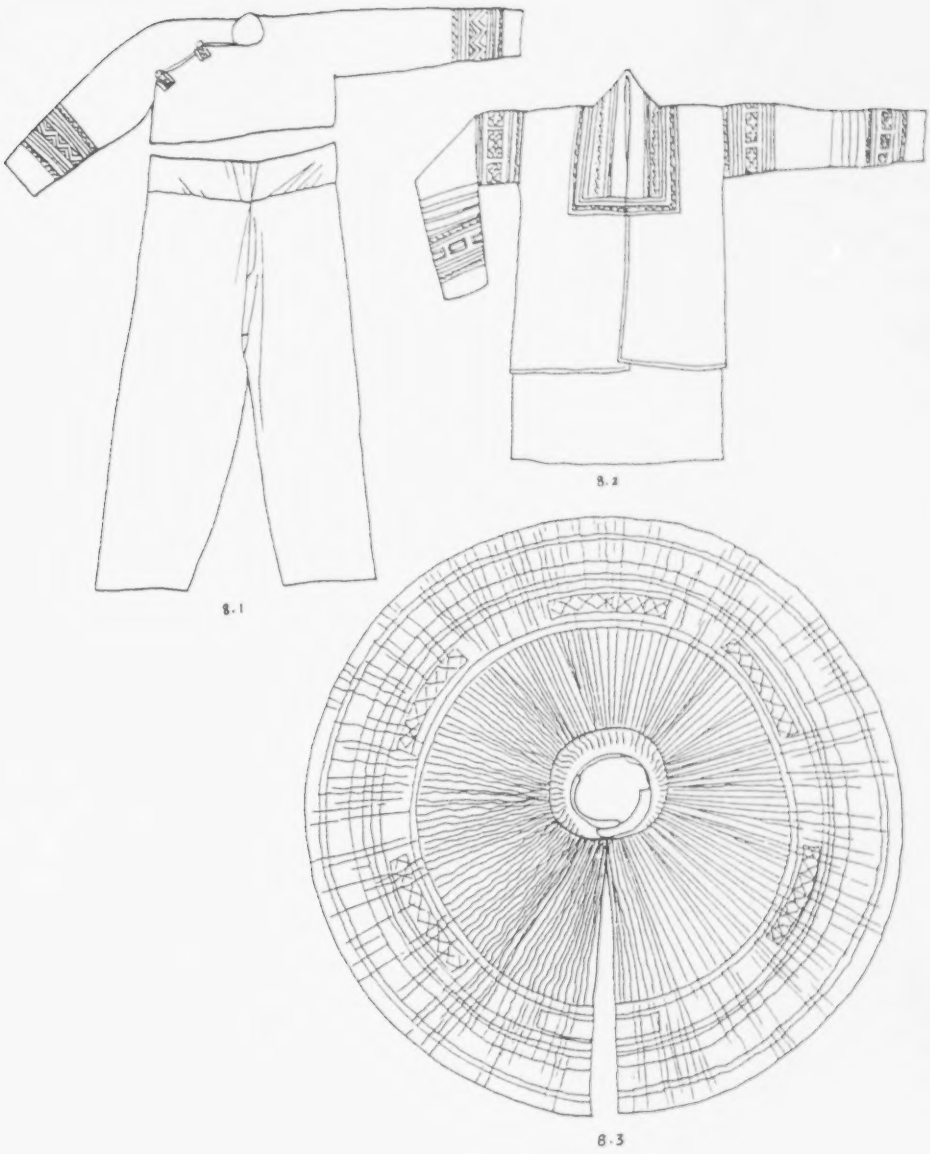

Figure 8. Miao costumes from Tongchang of Jinping County, Yunnan Province. 8.1: Men's wear; 8.2 & 8.3: Women's outfit. The Men's jacket has a very short bodice. The women's pleated skirt consists of batik, applique and embroidery fabrics. Similar styles can also be seen in the Golden Triangle area (Drawn by Naiyu Cao, 1993, after Clothing and ornaments of China's Miao People, CPN. 1985)

The snailhouse motif combines a pair of spirals at their outside rims. The elephant's foot motif is comprised of four snailhouse motifs placed in a square and surrounded by a number of rings. The curves of the rings around the snailhouse pairs create a distinct flowerlike motif (Faubion, 1993)(see Figure 12, page 52).

Textile Designs in the Qian-zhong-nan Style

The Qian-zhong-nan style of textile designs features a combination of Qian-dong and Chuan-qian-dian styles with respect to the textile materials, colors, and motifs utilized. Refined cross-stitch, embroidery and appliqué work are found on women's clothing. The elbow section of the sleeves and the back hemline are decorated with embroidered geometric motifs (Figure 9).

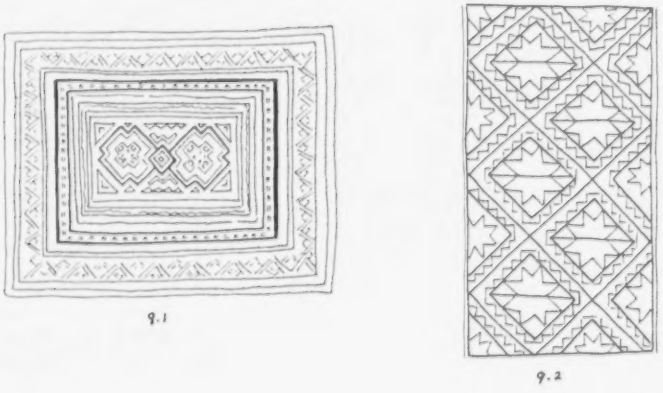

Figure 9. Qian-zhong-nan Miao clothing features geometric motifs in batik, embroidery and appliqué techniques (Drawn by Naiyu Cao, after Clothing and ornaments of China's Miao people, CPN. 1985).

CPN (1985) states that one group of the Miao known as the Ge wear red tasselled caps, batiked coats, pleated skirts and floral leggings (Figure 10). In employing birds, bees, butterflies, bats, flowers and berries as design motifs, Ge women express a bold and imaginative touch in their textile production. Miao women of Anshun county of Guizhou province decorate their costumes with stitching and embroidery. They usually use red or pink colors on black grounds, and yellow, blue and white as supporting colors (CPN, 1985).

Textile Designs in the Hainan Style

The Hainan style reflects the textiles and costumes worn by the Miao on Hainan Island. Since the island is situated in the subtropical zone, the textiles of these Miao people are relatively simple and basically the same the year round. CPN (1985) states that women wear deep blue blouses throughout the year. The skirt is mostly covered by a knee-length blouse, with a limited number of batik patterns appearing under the right front hemline of the blouse.

Women bind up their hair or cover it with a headscarf. Reilly (1987) states that most of the headscarves have predominantly white cross-stitched embroidery with floral designs on an indigo-dyed cotton background. Colored silk threads are used to embellish the batiked and cross-stitched designs.

Figure 10. A young Ge woman with her foot loom (Drawn by Naiyu Cao, 1992, after "From Unusual Customs of the Ge Minority" by H. Qiu, Photograph by J. Xie, 1990, China Today, 9, p. 66,)

Miao Textile Production Techniques

The Miao have a long history of practicing textile production techniques (Larsen, 1976; Lu, 1981; CPN, 1985; Reilly, 1987). Ancient textile production methods have flourished among the Miao for many years and Larsen (1976) states that according to old Chinese sources, Miao and several other ethnic groups in south and southwest China practiced batik before they came under Chinese influence. Today, these methods still play an important part in the everyday lives of Miao women (Rossi, 1990; Wan, 1992). The textile production techniques employed by Miao women include hand weaving, wax resist dyeing, applique, pleating, and other natural dyeing methods (Larsen, 1976; Campbell, 1978; Lu, 1981; CPN, 1985; Reilly, 1987; Rossi, 1990; Wan, 1992).

Wax Resisted Textiles

Lu (1981) states that Chinese batik has a history of more than two thousand years. Along with tie-dyeing and clamp dyeing using wooden blocks, batik was one of the major forms of resist dyeing in ancient China. Reference to batik is found in the historical records of the Han and Tang dynasties (206 B.C.- A.D.220 and A.D. 618-907) respectively. This textile tradition, however, has been little used by the Han majority for the past several centuries. Part of the reason for this is that imperial courts and governments tended to prefer so-called "palace art" such as painting, calligraphy, porcelain,

cloisonne, lacquerware, and silk embroidery, rather than the folk arts such as batik, weaving, stitching (Zhang, 1981).

Indigo batik is mainly a folk art of China's minority peoples, especially among the Miao (Larsen, 1976; Lu, 1981; T. Li, 1985; NACG, 1987; Qiu, 1990). The Miao produce batik fabrics by drawing patterns on cloth with copper knives dipped into molten wax (Lu, 1981; NACG, 1987). The drawing knives are different in shape from the tjanting tools used by peoples in Indonesia or in Africa. Miao knives are made from two or more pieces of copper with spaces left between them to carry wax. They are axe-shaped in appearance (see Figure 11) and are especially good for drawing either fine or thick lines. By rotating the knives at different angles, lines and forms with changing shapes can be drawn. Since copper retains heat, the charge of wax flows easily when the pattern is drawn on fabrics (Lu, 1981).

Lu (1981) discusses the tools, materials, and the methods which the Miao use for producing batik. The cloth is bleached first. Before drawing with wax begins, the fabrics are stiffened with a paste starch made from the tuber of taro. Beeswax and paraffin wax are mixed in proportions which differ from area to area. The proportions depend upon the intent of the designer and the quality of the cloth to which the wax is being applied. If the material is relatively thick and absorbent, then more paraffin wax is used.

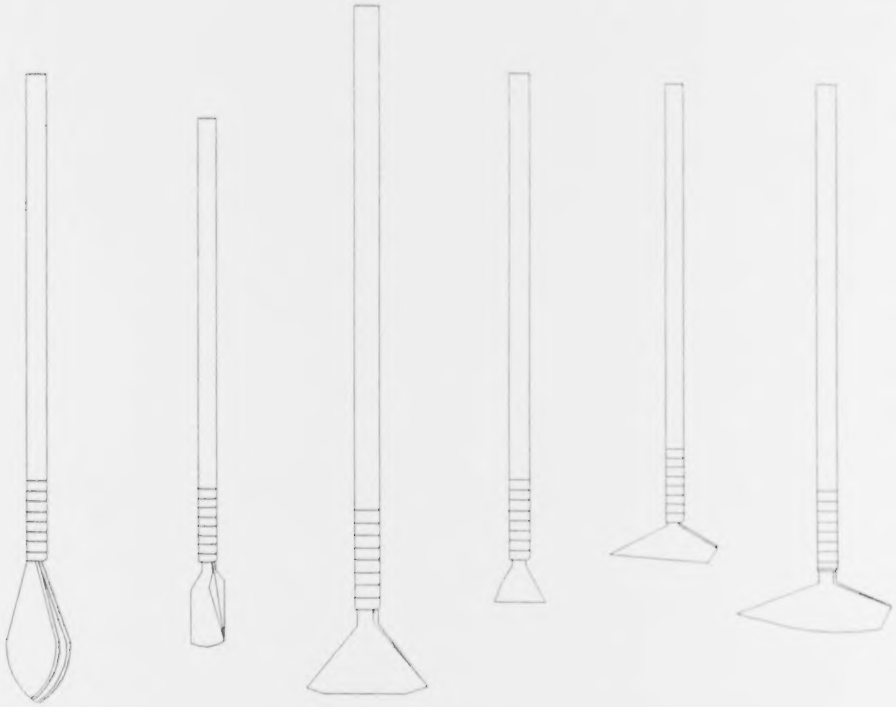

Figure 11. Several different-shaped waxing knives used by the Miao people in Guizhou (Drawn by Naiyu Cao, after Designs of Chinese Indigo Batik, by Lu, P. 1981, Beijing: New World Press and Ethnic Costume from Guizhou: Clothing Designs and Decorations from Minority Ethnic Groups in Southwest China, by NACG, 1987)

Additional materials used by the Miao with batik include ox bones which are used to press the starched cloth flat and smooth; bamboo sections which are used to draw circles; and earthenware bowls which are used to hold the molten wax over the burning charcoal.

Most batik textiles are dyed with indigo blue. Natural indigo dyestuff is made from the fermented leaves of Polygonum Tinctorium, an annual herbaceous plant belonging to the Polygonaceae family. Lu (1981) also records that the Miao produce batik in other colors. Red dye is made from red bayberry leaves, while yellow dye is produced from Frandinus Chinensis leaves or Gardenia Jasminoides seeds.

The Miao utilize two methods to make multicolor batiks. One method used is to dye the waxed cloth blue and then to let it dry. After removing the wax, blue, red, yellow and other colors are dyed over the blue, leading to new color combinations. The other method used to make multicolor batiks is to dye the fabric with red or yellow first while the rest of the cloth is protected with the wax. The wax then is removed and more wax is placed over selected colored portions. The fabric is then dipped into an indigo vat. This latter method leads to pure, unmixed color effects (Lu, 1981).

Appliqué Textiles

One of the most colorful textile design techniques of the Miao is appliqué. Campbell (1978) notes that appliqué consists

of cutting shapes from one material and stitching these onto another. The Miao use contrasting colors and multiple layers of appliqué to decorate the costumes worn by women, men and children. Red predominates and is often placed between black and white so that it looks especially vivid. Gold, pink, and either green or blue are other frequently used colors.

An interesting and popular form of appliqué is seen on the batik skirts worn by Miao women in Yunnan province, Burma and Thailand, where small geometrical shapes are cut from red or pink cloth and stitched to the batik fabrics. Traditional Miao appliqué textiles consist of a combination of techniques: geometric reverse appliqué, appliqué, elaborate embroidery, and cross-stitch (Faubion, 1993).

Pleated Textiles

Pleating is utilized in constructing festival skirts and wedding dresses (Bernatzik, 1947/1970; Campbell, 1978). Campbell (1978) states that the skirt length is pleated after being dipped in rice starch and pressed with flat stones. The pleats are basted first and then folded accordion-style. The basting threads are pulled tight and egg whites are applied to coat the dyed fabrics. Egg whites serve to fix the color, holding the pleats in place, and producing a shiny appearance. For some skirts, the cloth is first soaked in rice liquid to starch it, then dried, folded and rolled tightly to make many narrow pleats. To keep the pleats in place, the skirts are

stored in bamboo tubes.

The typical pleated Miao skirt is six meters long and thirty centimeters wide. The bottom of the skirt is always embroidered and decorated with silver ornaments. The pleated Miao skirts are designed so that the cloth can swing and swish about the body.

Traditional Textile Dyeing Techniques

Rossi (1990) states that ancient dyeing methods are still used by Miao women inhabiting remote mountain areas of Guizhou, Guangxi and Hunan provinces and the hills of the Golden Triangle. The geographical isolation of these rugged areas which the Miao inhabit has helped to preserve a wide range of unusual textile traditions. Although synthetic dyestuffs are used in some regions, many women prefer the lasting beauty of the time-honoured natural dyeing methods. Natural dyes are obtained from materials such as indigo, beans, bark, pig's blood, ox skin, egg whites and red peppers (Beauclair, 1970; Reilly, 1987; Rossi, 1990; Wang, 1992). Rossi records that cloth is dyed, dried, redyed, beaten, smoked, and steamed in various processes, sometimes requiring over one hundred steps. These processes differ from area to area and from village to village.

Traditional dyeing in the Zhouxi area consists of a number of steps. The white cloth is dipped three times in natural indigo before it is immersed eight times in a white

liquid made from pressed beans. This liquid tends to assist the cloth in absorbing the color. The fabric is re-dipped in indigo, three times a day for five days. The cloth must be thoroughly dried between each dipping. To produce darker colors, the cloth can be dipped up to seven times in a reddish-black vat made by boiling an undetermined plant root in water. It is then placed two or three times in a gluey substance made by boiling an ox skin in water. The liquid derived from the ox hide stiffens the cloth and makes the dye colorfast (Rossi, 1990; Wang, 1992). Sometimes, fabrics are dipped once in pig's blood to add a reddish sheen. The fabric is then placed in a wooden bucket and steamed for one hour. This helps to fix the dye. The fabric is then beaten with a wooden mallet on a large flat stone, which helps to increase the sheen of the fabric. Finally it is re-dipped in indigo repeatedly, until the desired depth-of-shade is achieved (Rossi, 1990; Wang, 1992).

In Huangping and Kaili counties of Guizhou, Miao women use violet to color their fabrics. The violet is derived from a bluish flower known as Gentian which grows in some mountainous areas. Miao women spread the dye onto the fabric with a brush. It is then held over a smouldering fire of smoking cypress leaves. The cloth is beaten until it is completely dry and this process is repeated until the cloth turns a brilliant metallic gold. Such fabric is made into

festive costumes.

Application of egg whites during the dyeing process is also one of the unique dyeing techniques used by the Miao (Reilly, 1987; Rossi, 1990; Wan, 1992). Beaten egg whites are spread onto the fabric to obtain a surface which shines like glass. In some areas, egg whites are applied to the tight folds of finely pleated skirts. Then the pleated skirts are steamed and dried, and the pleating stitches are removed. The egg whites left on the outer folds of each pleat reflect light, especially as the wearer moves. Some Miao women mix egg whites and ground red peppers. This mixture is applied to the cloth and steamed to produce a silvery purple-red sheen (Reilly, 1987; Rossi, 1990).

The Role of Miao Women in Textile Design and Production

Miao textile design and production is the work of women. It is the women who practice weaving, dyeing, and embroidery (Bernatzik, 1947/1970; Larsen, 1976; Graham, 1978). Bernatzik (1947/1970) states that the struggle for existence in the mountains requires the co-operation of both men and women but various tasks among the Miao are reserved for one or the other sex. Work that is exclusively for men includes hunting, climbing trees, felling large trees, building stables for livestock, and making weapons. Women's activities include the preparation of yarn, spinning, weaving, dyeing, batik and embroidery. Women practice textile production in addition to

agricultural duties and performing household chores.

Miao women have devoted a considerable amount of time, energy, and experimentation to the exploration of various types of textile production techniques, materials, and motifs. Producing textiles is an extremely time-consuming activity. Campbell (1978) mentions that it can take from six months to a year to complete a pleated skirt. Wan (1986) states that a complete set of wedding garments can take ten years to make.

Miao women's industriousness and creativity have helped to ensure the development and continuance of Miao textile design and production techniques (Bernatzik, 1947/1970; NACG, 1987) and it is the Miao women who continue to promote textile design by adapting these to the contemporary environment. In addition, Miao women play significant roles in the retention of Miao textile traditions. The survival of many exquisite Miao textile design techniques over thousands of years is due to the diligence and ability of Miao women textile designers to adapt to changing circumstances.

By elaborately working on textile design from an early age and by exchanging creative ideas and techniques with other women in villages, many Miao women become textile experts and as such they continue the evolution of the Miao textile designs. Mastery of textile production techniques on the part of Miao women is highly valued in Miao society and high quality workmanship is respected in local communities (Y. Liu,

1986). There are many festivals functioning as competitions, exhibitions, and fairs for exchanging new designs and techniques for textile and costume production. Festivals, ceremonies, weddings, and daily life are occasions when people wear or use traditional textiles and clothing. These occasions provide opportunities for the textile designs to be displayed (Long, 1986; Wan, 1986; Xie, 1987; Zeng, 1992). Some villages have councils to evaluate women's textiles and dress. Those textiles and costumes judged best at the festivals make the whole family very proud (Xie, 1987). The comments and evaluation on such occasions link the members of the village and permit others to become involved in textile design activities.

Art Creation as Convergence of Streams

Although designs and techniques vary widely, a primitive African sculpture, a painting by a Renaissance master, or a skyscraper in an American city are all based on the same principles such as unity and variety, balance, rhythm, and proportion governing aesthetic validity (Bevlin, 1984).

In the process of creating works of art, artists confront problems that must be solved. Poets must search for just the right words; painters must determine how to make a plane appear to recede; designers must choose the materials and techniques that enhance patterns and colors (Winner, 1982; Bevlin, 1984). Winner (1982) explores the psychological

attributes of the creation of art. In her book, she discusses questions concerning how artists create artistic work. The creative process involves both unconscious incubation and elaboration phases. The incubation phase offers fortuitous inspiration as the germ of an art work. Inspiration supplies only the germ which must then be followed by hard work. During the phase of elaboration, an artist painstakingly expands the tiny seed given by inspiration. This phase is described as one of careful reworking and refinement. Winner suggests that during the process of creative work, a sequence of different types of thought is experienced by the artist. The different phases of thought occur in a certain order: a moment of inspiration must follow a much longer period of conscious work as well as a period in which the artist has taken a break from the work at hand. Winner also notes that the creative mind is often guided by "images of wide scope," in which diverse elements are joined so as to allow a reconceptualization of a field of knowledge.

Franklin (1989) developed the notion of "converging streams." She suggests that creative activity can be a process both technically and conceptually of bringing parts from various sources together into a unified whole. Franklin explains that the notion of a "stream" refers to the ongoing flow of wishes, ideas, aims, and endeavors that have some experiential unity, an interconnected set of feelings, ideas,

and activities that an artist or designer considers to be representative of his or her work. She analyses the creative process in the work of the American artist, Zink. When Zink involved herself in the creative process, she created a new work stream that drew upon extensive resources such as memories of childhood play, interest and knowledge about art, archaeology, ancient ritual, myth, skills as well as ideas acquired in earlier artistic endeavors. Equally important to the emergence of the new work were the artist's increasing skills in the creation of the work.

Many researchers such as Keller (1976), Larsen (1976) and Moyer (1991) have explored fields of textile design. Larsen (1976) investigated various textile design and dyeing techniques such as ikat, batik, and tie dyeing worldwide. He suggests that many of these techniques were developed to a high standard by years of exploration and by influences from various cultures. Keller (1976) investigated the history of batik and modern batik methods. The study illustrates the evolution of the batik techniques. Kwon (1977) conducted a comprehensive investigation of the symbolic and decorative functions of Korean woven silk designs. His study suggests that traditional textile designs should be adapted to the contemporary environment. Moyer (1991) reviews textile design processes especially related to silk resist painting. Her book traces the history and development of hand-painting on

fabrics. Moyer also examined gutta and wax resist textile design techniques. She states that mastering tools, materials, and techniques is important because these take on specific roles as catalysts for the designer's creativity.

Other researchers have conducted research with respect to using cross-cultural textiles as inspiration for contemporary textile design. McHaffey (1954) explored traditional designs, such as Egyptian, Greek, and Byzantine motifs, in modern textile design. She states that the use of traditional motifs will continually gain popularity. Fu (1972) examined textile designs produced for the Taiwanese textile industry. She explored symbolism in Chinese art and adapted traditional Chinese motifs for contemporary textile designs. Fu states that while using traditional sources of designs, the idea of art as mere copying has no place in creative art. What can be absorbed from the rediscovery of traditional art motifs is the vitality, mood, and inspiration of the motifs. To achieve originality, recognition of self and having the courage to explore new ideas are essential attributes of success. Baudoin (1984) used African designs and techniques to produce contemporary fabrics. She studied textile designs and techniques in West Africa in order to help improve and increase African textile production. Singh (1989) examined Indian textiles and techniques from Gujarat and adapted them to contemporary decorative textile designs. Singh states that

Gujarati textiles of India can be a source of inspiration for contemporary textile designers. Muc (1989) explored applied decorative design on handwoven cloth by using Sumatran textiles as a source of inspiration. She suggests that such a cross-cultural study can aid the designer in understanding various cultures and in developing novel ideas for textile design.

CHAPTER 3

Research Design

The methodology used for this study is discussed under the following headings: (a) research methods, (b) collection of data, and (c) design and analysis.

Research Methods

Researchers such as Daly (1984), Hultgren (1989), and Pannabecker (1990) have found that many research problems in the field of human ecology and home economics are "basically qualitative research questions" which require an interpretive approach (Daly, 1984, p.355). Hultgren (1989) states that an interpretive approach seeks to clarify, authenticate, uncover or bring to full human awareness, meaning structures as expressed by persons in their everyday experiences. The interpretive approach employed by this researcher in the study is an ethnohistorical method which was used to investigate the historical and cultural background and development of Miao textile designs.

Pannabecker (1990) developed the notion of "ethnohistory." Ethnohistorical methods link historical and ethnographic methods and are useful, especially in cross-cultural textiles and clothing studies (Pannabecker, 1990). Pannabecker views the combination of historical and ethnographical methods as an interdisciplinary approach and suggests that the integration of ethnographical and historical

approaches is relevant to studies of the cultural dimensions of textiles and clothing. The inclusion of historical analysis supports cross-cultural research that extends beyond the concept of the ethnographic present. Pannabecker (1990) states that the utility of the historical and ethnographical methods is demonstrated by its application in studies of textile and clothing artifacts, in studies exploring the cultural contexts of textiles and clothing, and in studies investigating changes in those cultural systems. The data regarding the social, religious, economic, and technological contexts integrated with the historical dimension through ethnohistory methods provide a foundation for the analysis and interpretation of cultural aspects of textiles and clothing (Pannabecker, 1990).

In this investigation, the ethnohistorical method was used to gain an understanding of Miao textile designs and techniques as well as an understanding of the sociocultural context and the knowledge necessary for the production of textile designs. Wax resist and direct dyeing techniques, as well as CAD, were used to produce a collection of textile designs inspired by Miao textiles.

Collection of Data

Data collection included an examination of the historical and cultural aspects of Miao daily life as well as their textiles, raw materials used in textile production, equipment, motifs, colors, and design configurations. The data collection

methods included library research, informal interview, and visits to museums. Miao artifacts have been examined in various museums including the China Nationality Museum in Beijing and the Clothing and Textile Collection located in the Department of Human Ecology at the University of Alberta. Textile samples collected by the museums and by this researcher were used as primary sources of data. Books, periodicals, museum catalogues, photographs, and unpublished theses and dissertations were employed as secondary sources.

Library Research

Literature related to Miao and Chinese history, culture, textile traditions and symbolism was reviewed. Unpublished theses and dissertations in the thesis collection of the Department of Human Ecology of University of Alberta and from other universities such as Iowa State University, Kansas State University, Cornell University, and Texas Woman's University were reviewed through the Inter-Library Loan program. The theses and dissertations were examined to determine the extent of other research which has been undertaken in the area of Miao textile design and creation. The computer data base, Stanford Public Information Retrieval System (SPIRES) was employed to search for theses and dissertations relating to investigations in textile design and cross-cultural textiles. Library research was conducted mainly at the University of Alberta and the Edmonton Public Libraries.

Publications about the Miao written in English and Chinese have provided valuable information. Books, museum catalogues, photographs, newspapers, and other visual reference materials published in French, German, and Japanese were also employed to obtain data and to collect visual information for the study. In addition, books and museum catalogues published in People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Hongkong, Southeast Asia were found through the libraries and through personal communications. The books and museum catalogues offer divergent views on many aspects of the Miao and provide various viewpoints for observing and understanding the Miao and their culture.

Informal Interviews

Informal interviews was used to acquire information concerning Miao textile design. This included interviews with Ms. Feng Ruijuan of Shenzhen Textiles and Clothing Research Institute in China (PRC). Telephone communication and correspondence was undertaken with Mr. Paul Hughes, Curator of Fine Textile Art Museum in London, and Ms. Hu Yue, Assistant Professor of Beijing Institute of Clothing Technology. Reference materials updates were obtained through correspondence with Professor Jinchun Yang and Professor Zefen Wang of Chengdu University of Science and Technology, Ms. Tuhong Si of Nanjing Normal University, and Ms. Hui Fang of China Central Television (CCTV).

Design and Analysis

Data collection and analysis was conducted in order to assess the cultural significance and aesthetic principles of Miao clothing and textiles. Traditional textile motifs, colors, designs and techniques were utilized in order to produce a contemporary textile collection. Miao textile designs and techniques were explored to investigate the possibilities for their use in producing contemporary textile designs. Textiles from selected southern Chinese provinces were chosen for the focus of the analysis.

Documentation

The first part of the study consisted of evaluating the design styles of Miao textiles. Miao textiles were classified with respect to their motifs, colors, materials, and production equipment. Photographs of costumes and Miao communities from fieldwork conducted by Ruijuan Feng were used to provide additional information for the analysis. The design processes leading to the production of the contemporary textiles are documented for the research as well as to provide information for future textile design researchers pursuing study in the textile design area.

Creation of the Textile Design Collection

The textile design processes utilized in this study included an analysis of Miao motifs, Computer-Aided Design applications, the completion of color studies, and preparation

of materials. All these lead to the execution of the contemporary textile designs and textiles.

Analysis of Motifs. Miao motifs from southern China and Southeast Asia were used as design inspiration throughout this study. The selection of these motifs for the textile designs was based on the subjective aesthetic judgement of the researcher. One device that this researcher chose for selecting motifs was to sort out those motifs that represent Miao textile traditions and also appeal to the broader interests of a wider audience.

Geometric motifs were used throughout the researcher's textile designs. This researcher chose mainly geometric motifs to execute textile designs because aesthetic features of geometric motifs including lines, circles, triangles, and their organization are universally accepted and more adaptable to contemporary society. Although many geometric motifs found in Miao textiles have specific meanings such as the star, elephant foot, army flag and city map, they all retain other aesthetic features that a Euro-Canadian audience can appreciate (Zygas, 1986; Faubion, 1993).

This researcher did not use Miao auspicious and figurative Miao motifs such as the phoenix, dragon, and pomegranate in this research, since these motifs have specific symbolic meanings within the Miao sociocultural context. For example, the pomegranate has many seeds, and it has

traditionally symbolized the saying "bearing more children brings one greater fortune." These specific meanings do not transfer to the contemporary Euro-Canadian environment.

Computer-Aided Design. Computer-Aided Design (CAD) technology was applied to execute motif variations and design compositions. Based on the analysis of motifs, a decision was made to select mainly Miao geometric motifs for the CAD emulation. Using CAD, the basic motif can be varied in numerous ways in terms of size, angle, and color. Various Miao motifs from seven Southern Chinese provinces and from Southeast Asia were drawn on the computer. Various motifs were created and stored as symbol blocks. A symbol library of Miao textiles was built with these blocks (Figure 12). These blocks can be reused to create new drawings and the symbol library could be extended and developed in future.

It is the accurate and versatile qualities of CAD technology that makes the motif study distinctive. Basic motifs can be created on the computer and these basic computerized motifs are more consistent as well as more flexible for producing intricate designs. This is especially so for the border or repetitive patterns (Figure 13). The CAD technology enabled the researcher to edit compositions of textile designs in a quick and flexible manner and enabled the plotting of the final patterns in desirable sizes which could be directly applied to producing the finished textiles.

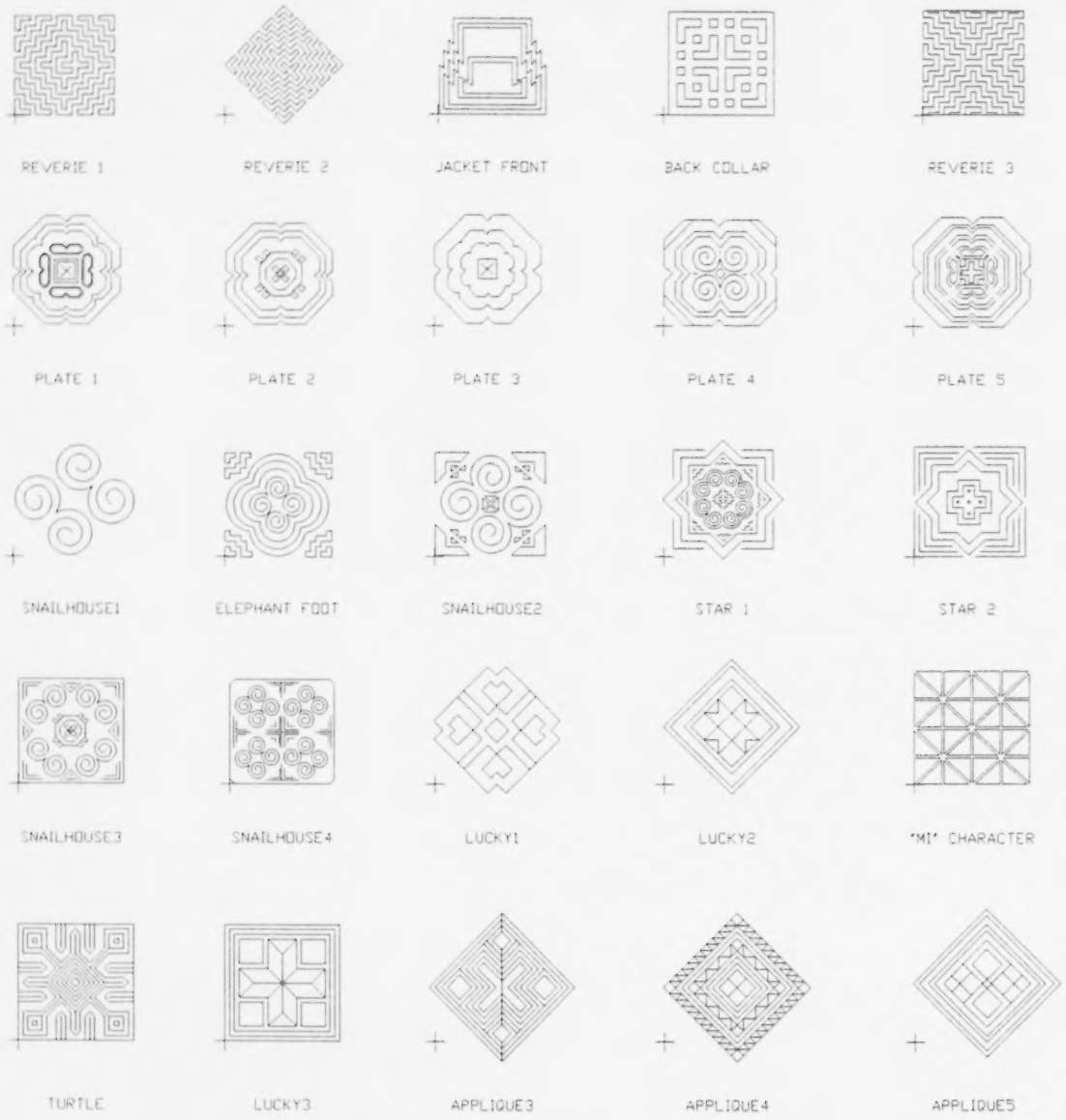

Figure 12. A Miao design motif symbol library was built using the AutoCAD program. The library includes traditional Miao design motifs which can be modified and applied ad infinitum (Designed by Naiyu Cao, 1994)

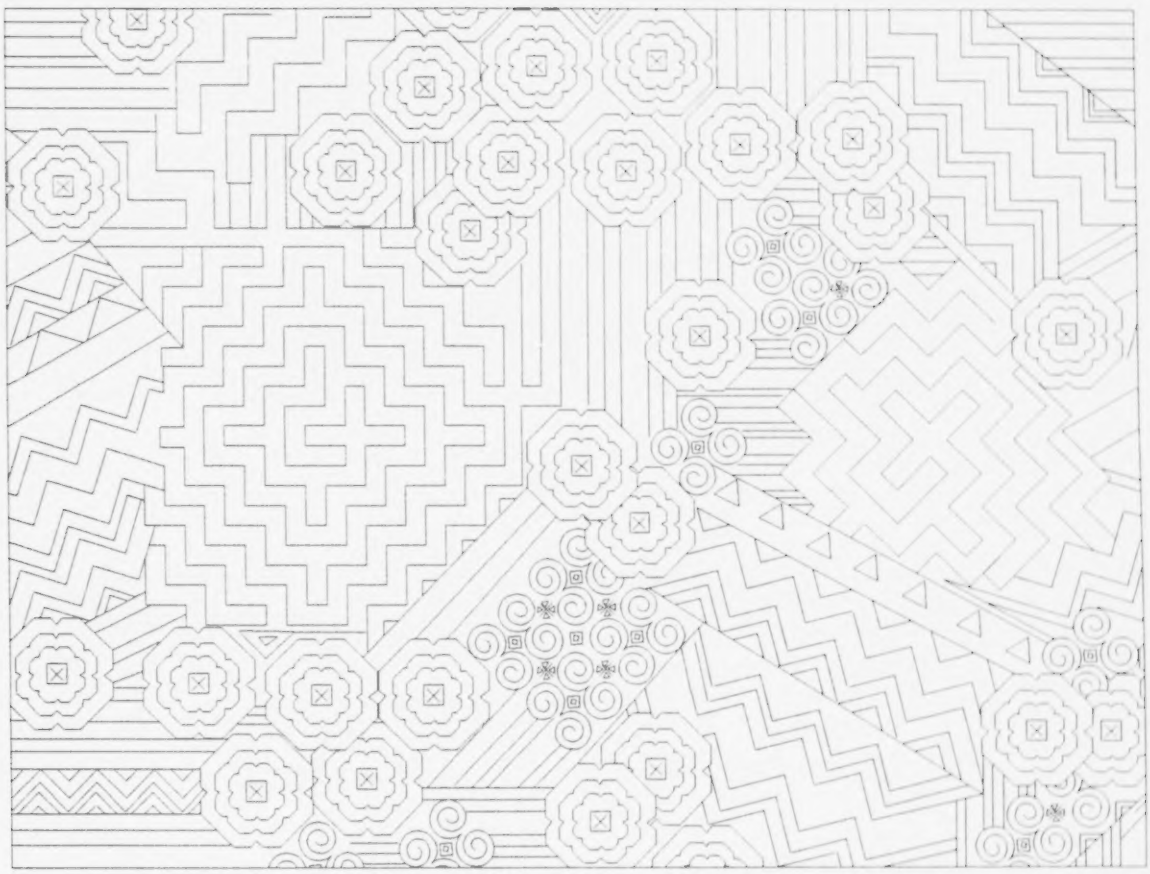

Figure 13. A design developed using the AutoCAD program for the textile design collection. Basic Miao motifs such Bouw Chua reverie or plate motifs were incorporated into the design using CAD technology (Designed by Naiyu Cao, 1994).

Color Studies. Color combinations inspired by Miao textiles were incorporated into this researcher's textiles. The color studies were created by applying gouache to white cardboard. Color combinations were formed by using various shades of red, black, pink, and yellow since these were colors used often on most traditional Miao textiles. The colors combinations convey the style and vitality of new designs inspired by Miao textiles which appeal to a wide audience.

Techniques. A variety of techniques for producing textiles are utilized by the Miao. Wax resist direct dyeing techniques were the primary methods used in this study. The researcher chose wax resist direct dyeing techniques because of the versatility of applying many different colors by utilization of direct dyeing. The use of many colors was important as it helped produce new textiles which embody the colorful effects of Miao embroidery, applique, and batik.

Fabric Selection. To emulate the mood and the vitality of Miao textiles, natural fiber fabrics were selected for this research. These fabrics included 100 percent natural fibre fabrics such as 12 m/m pure silk habotai, 24.5 m/m tussah silk, as well as bleached cotton poplin and unbleached cotton fabrics. This researcher considered the features of the various designs, so that light and fine fabrics were chosen for delicate patterns, while heavy and coarse cottons and tussah silk were used for bold designs.

Dye Selection. Procion H Liquid Fibre Reactive dyes obtained from Cerulean Blue Ltd., Opulence Silks and Dyes, and Maiwa Handprints were used in the production of the designs. Fiber Reactive dyes react chemically with the fiber molecules and become integral with them during the dyeing process. The dye colors are exceptionally bright and have excellent wash and light fastness. As well, Fiber Reactive dyes are especially suitable for handpainting in a studio setting. The dyes are easy to use. The dyes colors can be readily mixed with each other to obtain new colors. The disadvantages of using Fiber Reactive dyes are potential health hazards, quick decomposition of the stock solution, and the higher cost of those dyes as opposed to acid or other dyes.

Fabric Preparation. The silk was washed in warm water and Synthrapol. Cotton fabrics were boiled to remove impurities and sizing. Before undertaking the design tracing and waxing procedures, the unbleached cottons and coarse tussah silk were ironed in order to achieve a smoother fabric surface.

Production of Textile Designs. Designing textiles involved a series of steps which required utilizing creative problem solving processes to integrate considerations of space, texture, color, line, and shape. The principles of design were also considered as well as the potential of the materials and the production techniques to be employed.

In creating the textile designs for this investigation,

the researcher followed a number of steps. Firstly, new designs began with rough drawings on paper. Some of the border patterns and repetitive motifs were developed by using AutoCAD. Secondly, exploratory color studies were produced on cardboard with gouache or felt pens. Thirdly, after a number of revisions of the composition and color combinations of the designs, refined versions of the designs were chosen. Fourthly, each textile design was developed in full scale on paper. Fifthly, a series of fabric samples were produced in the design laboratory. Finally, the designs were traced onto two and a half meter textile lengths.

Production of the Textiles. The textile lengths were prepared by scouring the fabric in hot water and Synthrapol. Wax was applied to the fabrics in order to resist the dyes for creating the desired patterns. Beeswax and paraffin wax in a proportion of 1:1 were used as the resist. Three types of tools were used for applying the wax onto the fabrics. One type of tool used was a Ukrainian tjanting tool known as a "kiska." Another type of tool used was a Chinese woolen brush. The third type of tool used was a waxing knife made by the researcher in the style of traditional Miao waxing knives.

Procion H liquid dyes were applied to the fabric with brushes. Hand painting techniques allowed the dyeing process to evolve in a way similar to painting a picture with watercolors and helped convey the freehand style which is

typically found on many Miao textiles. Finishing of each textile included steaming, washing, and dry cleaning or boiling to remove the remaining wax.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis and Discussion

A collection of eight textiles was produced based on Miao textiles. Each textile measures approximately 2.5 meters. Although the design inspiration is based on traditional Miao sources, the motifs, colors, raw materials and techniques chosen for this study were selected by using a process involving the designer's personal aesthetic knowledge.

During the design process, this researcher found that one of the characteristics of Miao textile design traditions is the application of a variety of available tools, materials, techniques and ideas to create various textile designs. Inspired by the methodology that Miao women use to produce textiles, this researcher examined how new motifs could be developed from traditional Miao culture and this researcher's imagination; how materials such as refined silk or cotton poplin and traditional handwoven tussah silk could be applied to produce contemporary textiles; and how the various textile production techniques and CAD technology could be incorporated.

Inspired by Miao textiles and Miao women's design processes, this researcher became more open to new creative solutions and novel applications of colors, motifs, materials and techniques. In the researcher's textile design collection, various traditional Miao motifs were modified and developed

into new designs (Plate 1). Color combinations of scarlet red, pink, yellow, turquoise, black, grey and white were all employed to achieve a bright and bold color design style. By utilizing the wax resist dyeing technique, multicolored textiles were produced. Two dimensional motifs were organized to depict the visual effects of three-dimensional embroidery and applique and reverse appliqué Miao textiles.

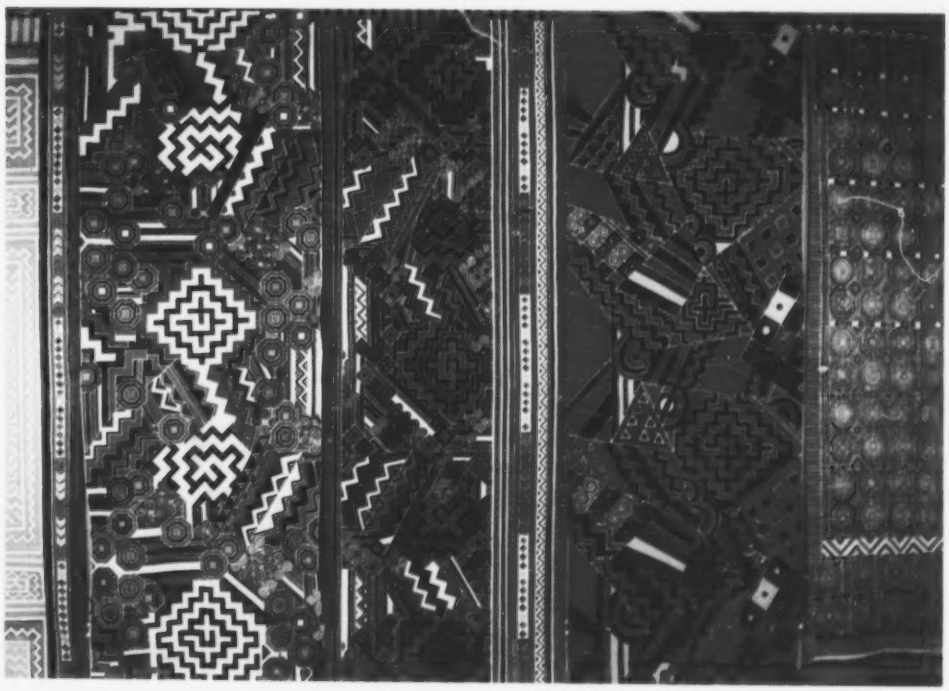

Plate 1. Four textiles designed by this researcher using traditional Miao textiles as inspiration (Designed by Naiyu Cao, 1994).

Among the textiles produced during this investigation mainly geometric motifs derived from Miao textile design traditions were utilized. Although the Miao use geometric motifs as well as figurative and auspicious motifs, this researcher found that many shapes of figurative motifs and the meanings of the auspicious motifs of Miao textiles were not always relevant when applied to textiles produced outside of the Miao cultural context. Thus, the researcher decided to focus on Miao geometric motifs. The researcher employed and developed the geometric motifs which not only have meaning in certain Miao cultural contexts but also possess generally accepted aesthetic features including harmony, variety, balance, emphasis, and rhythm.

The textile designs were developed in such a way that harmony among the textile designs of the collection was enhanced. Although each textile design which was produced is different, there is unity between and among them. The design elements employed in uniting each piece in the collection results from the selection of similar natural fibre fabrics, common color combinations, common production techniques, and the fact that a common source was used as inspiration.

Textile Design 1

Textile Design 1 (Plate 2) was produced on unbleached 100 percent cotton fabric with a rough surface. The rough texture of the fabric was employed to emulate the natural and rough features of Miao handwoven fabrics. Textile Design 1 measures 81cm x 260cm. A number of production steps were undertaken.

First, the cotton fabric was washed and boiled in hot water to remove impurities and sizing on the cotton. Second, after the fabric dried, it was ironed and the design pattern was traced onto the cotton with a Unique Fabric and Craft Marker pen. Third, a mixture of beeswax and paraffin was applied on the cotton. To let the melting wax penetrate well into the thick cotton fabric and to get a better dye resist effect, the wax was heated to a temperature of approximately 150°C. Fourth, Procion H Liquid Fiber Reactive dyes and direct painting techniques were used to produce the textile. Fifth, the fabric was steamed for forty-five minutes. Finally, the fabric was washed in hot water with Synthrapol and boiled to remove the excess dyes and wax.

Red dominates the whole composition of Textile Design 1. Black and white lines link the maze-like motifs into an overall pattern which derives from the inspiration on a "bouw chua" (reverie) Miao motif. A zigzag motif commonly found on Miao baby carrier cloths and "bouw chua" motif (see Figure 12 "reverie 2," page 52) were utilized. The reverie motif occurs

frequently on Miao women's back collars and jackets in the form of applique and reverse applique. The Miao believe that this mysterious motif depicts routes leading to the home of their ancestors. As such, it is reminiscent of a maze and may reflect the influence of Miao migration and sense of mysterious origins of the culture and ancestors. Meanwhile, these geometric motifs consist of squares, rectangles, and triangles which are combined in an aesthetic way and are visually satisfying.

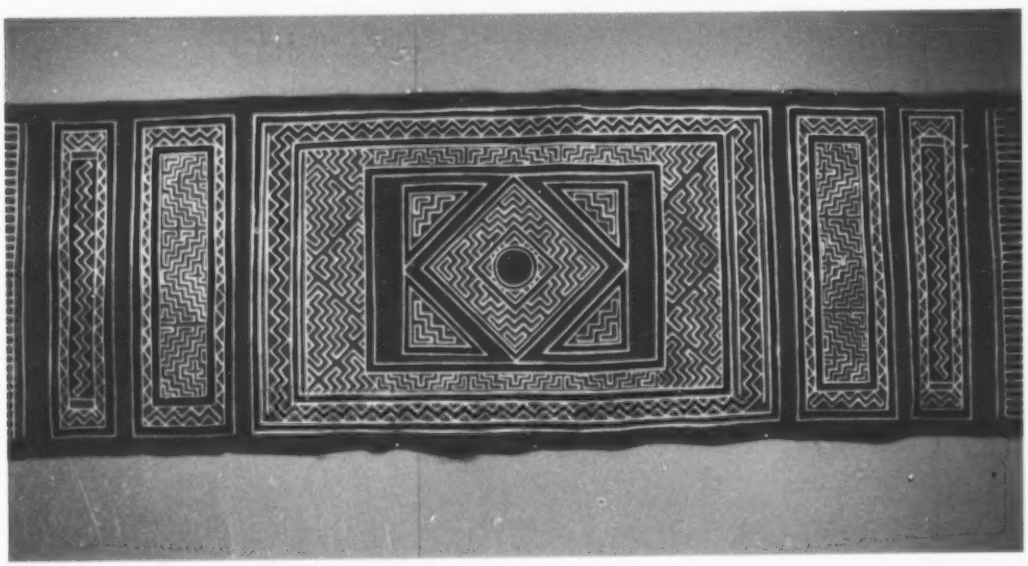

Plate 2. Textile Design 1.

Textile Design 2

Textile Design 2 (Plate 3) consists of modified Miao motifs such as reverie, snailhouse (spirals), and zigzags. An attempt was made in this design to express the vitality of Miao textile colors and motifs. Various motifs and colors interconnected in this design are based on inspiration from traditional Miao textiles.

The materials used in the design are similar to those used by Miao textile designers. Henan tussah silk, a 24.5 m/m handwoven wild silk fabric measuring 91cm x 256cm, was used to emulate the natural coarse hand of Miao handwoven textiles. Before applying the wax and dyes to the textile, the fabric was first scoured with hot water and Synthrapol. Then, the design pattern was traced with a Unique Fabric and Craft Marker. Wax resist lines were drawn on the silk fabric according to the pattern with a Chinese brush. The temperature of the melting wax was over 121°C to ensure good penetration of the wax. Procion H Liquid Fiber Reactive dyes were used for handpainting the design. After the design pattern was dyed and dry, the fabric was steamed for fifty minutes. Finally, the fabric was washed in warm water and Synthrapol and the wax was removed.

This textile was developed on AutoCAD. By employing line drawings, polygon, mirror and array commands, the motifs have been changed by using different angles and developed into an

integrated pattern. Motifs were incorporated which are commonly seen on Miao embroidery and appliqué. Using CAD provides more flexibility for the textile designer. The final design was based on a full scale AutoCAD plotted pattern.

Plate 3. Textile Design 2.

Textile Design 3

Textile Design 3 (Plate 4) was inspired by the embroideries of the Chuan-qian-dian style. The Miao embroideries found in Sichuan province reflect the use of ancient intricate Miao motifs. In this design, the Miao motifs have been modified and developed using a geometric format.

A 100 percent cotton fabric, with dimensions of 88cm x 260cm, was used for the design production. Before applying wax to the cotton, the fabric was scoured with warm water and Synthrapol. It was then boiled and washed again. Aobana washable ink was used to trace this design pattern. Beeswax and paraffin wax in a proportion of 1:1 were used as the resist. Wax resist lines were drawn by using a Chinese woolen brush. After the Procion H dyes were painted, the fabric was steamed twice. Each time the fabric was re-rolled and steamed for twenty-three minutes. The steaming time was decided by testing samples. Finally, the fabric was washed to remove the remaining dyes and wax.

Geometrical Miao plate-shaped motifs were organized in a regular repeating order while three decorative zigzag border motifs were introduced between the repetition of the plate motifs. Varied red plate motifs are central in this design, however, there are several striped motifs across the width of the fabric. These varied zigzag and vertical strip motifs feature white, black, and red color combinations which

introduce surprising and interesting attributes to the repetition of the plate motif patterns. The color and design patterns create a visual impression of the colorful embroidery of the Sichuan-Guizhou-Yunnan regions.

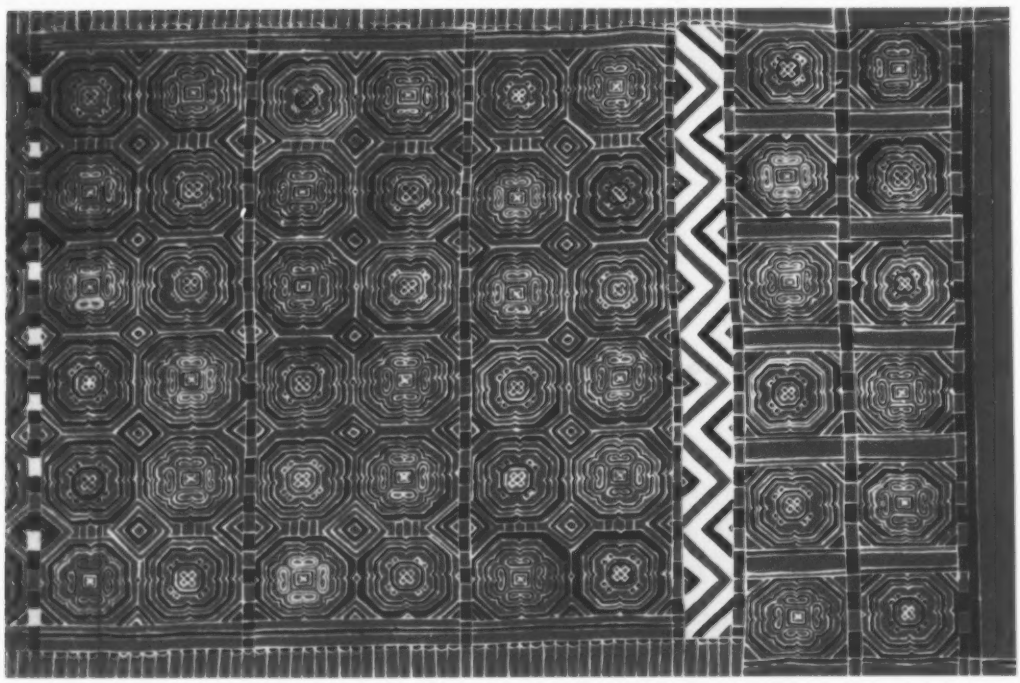

Plate 4. Textile Design 3.

Textile Design 4

The inspiration for this textile design (Plate 5) derived from the Chuan-qian-dian style, particularly from Miao jacket front panels and women's back collar motifs of Yunnan province. The Miao in Yunnan province, like the Thai Miao, utilize appliqué, reverse appliqué, and embroidery on their costumes. Miao women and men wear jackets with zigzag-shaped embroidered and appliquéd front panels. Women's back collars feature decorative geometric patterns.

A 12 m/m pure silk habotai was used in producing this design. The dimensions of the fabric are 56cm x 260cm. A Ukrainian "kiska" was employed to apply the wax resist lines on the design. By using the kiska, finer wax lines were able to be drawn on fabric. Compared with the brush and the waxing knife used in the research, a disadvantage of a kiska is that it is hard to connect wax lines evenly.

Since the silk fabric is fine, the temperature of the melting wax was kept lower than 121°C during the wax resist application process. After the silk was painted with Procion H dyes, the fabric was steamed twice. Each time the fabric was re-rolled and steamed for twenty minutes. The fabric was then washed in warm water with Synthrapol.

The design of this textile emphasizes the vivid colors of Miao textiles. By using continuous white wax lines with turquoise and black broken shapes along with a red motif, the

textile was designed to reflect a three-dimensional appliqué visual impression on a flat fabric surface.

Plate 5. Textile Design 4.

Textile Design 5

Textile Design 5 (Plate 6) was produced on 12 m/m silk Habotai from China. The dimensions of the textile are identical to Textile Design 4. The fabric preparation, waxing, dyeing, and finishing processes are the same as for that of Textile Design 4.

This design incorporates inspiration from motifs of jacket front panels, back collars, embroidered plate patterns of the Chuan-qian-dian Miao and Thai Miao. The visual effect of reverse appliqué on the back collar motifs portion of the textile was achieved by using bold red lines in a continuous form, while breaking the turquoise and black shapes between the red lines. Thickened Procion H black dye was used to reinforce the black lines and shapes. Grey was also introduced to enrich the black, white, and red color combinations.

Textile Designs 4 & 5 were designed as two panels each, so that the finished textiles can be hung on the wall separately or in pairs. Both textile designs consist of back collar, zigzag shaped jacket front panel motifs, and striped patterns. These spatial arrangements emulate the Miao textile style that incorporate Miao appliqué, reverse appliqué, batik, and embroidery fabrics into a large size textile.

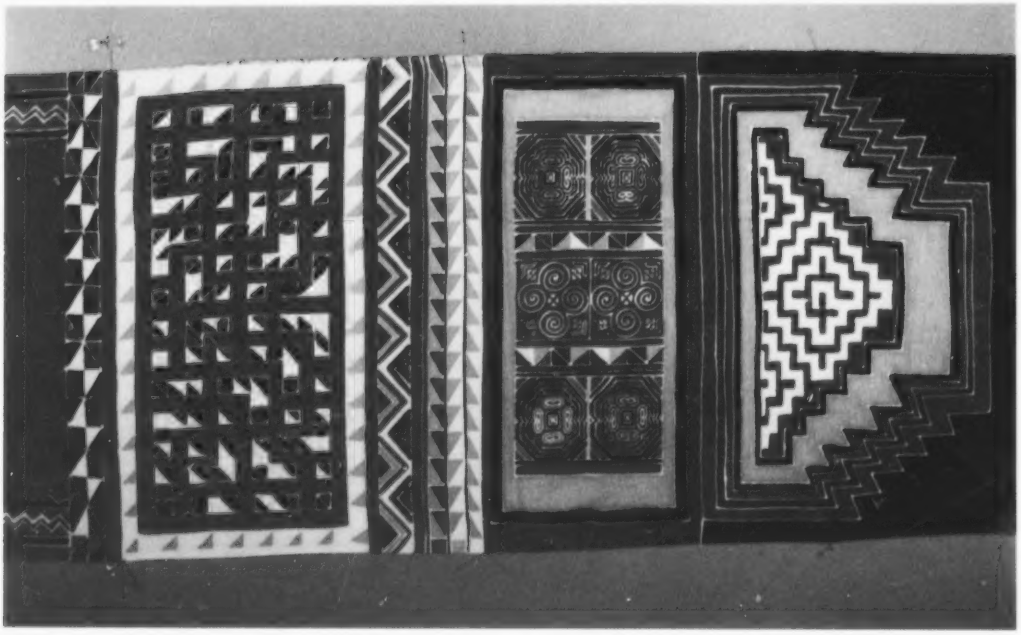

Plate 6. Textile Design 5.

Textile Design 6

Textile design 6 (Plate 7) was produced on bleached 100 percent cotton poplin fabric. The fabric has a width of 90cm and a length of 260cm. The production of the fabric included scouring the fabric with hot water and detergent, tracing the design onto the cloth using a Unique Fabric and Craft Marker, applying resist lines, dyeing the fabric with Procion H dyes, atmospheric steaming, and finishing. After the dyeing and finishing processes were completed, black lines were applied on the edges of the grey colored motifs with black Fabricfun Water Color Dye produced by Pentel Co. Ltd. The use of this dye serves to enhance the contrasts of black, grey, and white colors of the design. Direct painting techniques were used to paint the Fabricfun Water Color Dye onto the fabric. The Fabricfun Water Color Dye is permanent and washable once the dye dries.

The design motif and color arrangements of Textile Design 6 were inspired by Miao pleated skirts of the Chuan-qian-dian style. Large areas of zigzag motifs in grey colors emulate Miao batik dyed textiles. Although the grey color is different from the indigo blue color commonly used on Miao batik textiles, the decision was made to incorporate grey instead because it is aesthetically pleasing with the black, red, and white colors used in this textile for the researcher. The mood of various Miao embroidered, appliqué, and batik techniques

incorporated on one textile was depicted. The motif composition with motifs at centre and border patterns along four sides brings this design into correspondence with Textile Design 1 & 8. This textile demonstrates that design variations from the same inspiration sources are possible.

Plate 7. Textile Design 6.

Textile Design 7

The AutoCAD program was employed to develop the motifs and composition of Textile Design 7 (Figure 13 & Plate 8). The motifs and their arrangement were derived from the CAD drawing of Textile Design 2. By modifying the motif arrangement and introducing Miao plate motifs, the design distinguishes itself from the other seven designs.

Textile Design 7 was produced on 100 percent cotton fabric similar to the fabric that was used for Textile Design 3. The dimensions of the fabric are 88cm x 260cm. The fabric is coarse in hand which is similar to fabrics normally woven by Miao women. The fabric was first washed with hot water and Synthrapol. Wax resist lines were then applied to the textile and Procion H dyes were handpainted onto the fabric. The fabric was then steamed for forty-five minutes. After that, the fabric was washed with hot water and Synthrapol to remove any remaining wax and dye. Thickened black dye was employed with direct painting techniques in order to emphasize the black shapes and the fabric was steamed twice for twenty minutes. Washing and dry cleaning were the finishing processes used for this design.

Miao plate motifs were simplified and jointed with "bouw chua", spiral, and zigzag motifs. Black, grey, and white colors were incorporated with pink and turquoise blue in this textile. This combination of color is a characteristic of Miao

embroidered and appliqué textiles which incorporate strong color contrasts.

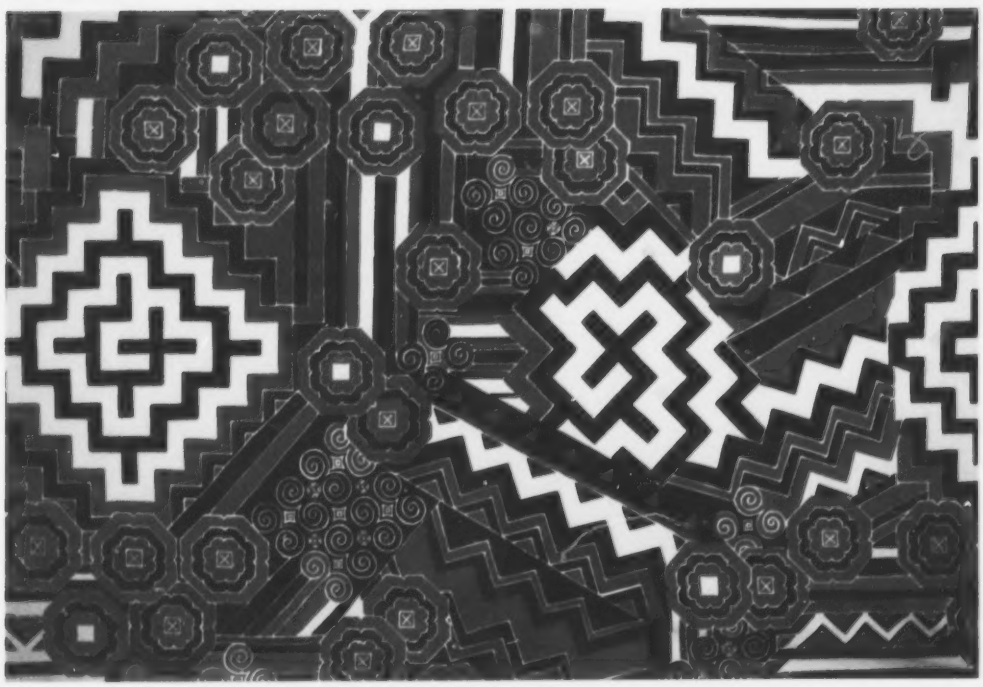

Plate 8. Textile Design 7.

Textile Design 8

Textile Design 8 (Plate 9) consists of the use of border patterns coupled with allover motifs. This design was inspired by the Chuan-qian-dian pleated skirts found among the Miao in Yunnan province and in Northern Thailand. Miao women in these regions normally sew several pieces of batik fabrics and multicolored woven belts together to produce a larger textile used with contrasting pleated skirts. The woven belt parts of the skirts are commonly decorated with embroidery or appliqué. In Design 8, border patterns were placed on four edges of the fabric and allover motifs were arranged in the centre part of the design. Varied motifs and border patterns were arranged to reflect the Miao tradition of combining various fabrics to create a large one. Black, scarlet, turquoise blue, green, yellow, and white form the color combination for this textile design.

100 percent cotton poplin fabric was used to produce this wax resist dyed textile. The fabric is 260cm long and 90cm wide. The production procedures utilized included washing the fabric in hot water and Synthrapol, tracing the CAD drawing to fabric with a Unique Fabric and Craft Marker, applying wax with a waxing knife, and dyeing the fabric with Procion H dyes, atmospheric steaming, and washing with hot water and Synthrapol. Finally, the fabric was drycleaned.

Plate 9. Textile Design 8.

CHAPTER 5

Summary

Summary

The textiles of the Miao are well known for the creativity, elaborate designs, vivid colors, and variety of production techniques which they exhibit. In this investigation, the researcher proposed that Miao textile traditions could be utilized as inspiration for the design and creation of contemporary textiles. The objectives of this investigation were to examine both primary and secondary sources related to the techniques, motifs, and the social milieu of Miao textile design traditions; and to explore the potential for producing contemporary textile designs based on inspiration from traditional Miao textiles.

The historical, social and cultural backgrounds of the Miao as described in a variety of academic sources were reviewed to examine the textile design activities of Miao women and to gain an understanding of the diversity of Miao textile designs and techniques. The review of literature showed that Miao textile traditions continue to play a central role in the everyday lives of the modern Miao.

Eight textiles based on inspiration provided by Miao textiles were produced. Miao textile design motifs, symbolism, and colors were interpreted in a contemporary context by the researcher. Although inspired by Miao textiles,

the motifs, colors and spatial qualities utilized in the textile designs and production were based on the aesthetic sensibilities of the researcher. The researcher attempted to sort those motifs that not only represent Miao textile traditions, but that also are expected to appeal to a Euro-Canadian audience.

In this study, the researcher chose wax resist direct dyeing techniques to execute the textiles. Natural fibre fabrics such as pure silk habotai, tussah silk, and cotton were chosen for this study. Procion H liquid Fibre Reactive dyes were used in the production of the textiles. The researcher made and used waxing knives similar in design to those used by Miao women. Geometric motifs were used for the execution of all the textile designs. Border patterns as well as allover designs were employed in producing the textiles.

In the process of designing the textiles, the researcher was continually confronted with various creative problems that required solutions. This investigation considered recent research findings which suggest that creative activity is a process both technically and conceptually of bringing parts from various sources together into a unified whole, the result of a "convergence of streams." In this investigation, the researcher concluded that Miao textiles can be used as a source of inspiration for contemporary textile design and production. The textiles produced during this research used

geometric textile design motifs, however there remains the potential for using Miao textiles as further inspiration sources for the production of other textiles.

Recommendations for Further Research

Designing contemporary textiles using inspiration from the textile traditions of the Miao or other cultural groups should be by no means confined to the use of geometric motifs nor should it be confined to the use of wax resist direct dyeing techniques. Other design projects could investigate Miao batik, appliqué and reverse-appliqué, embroidery, and weaving techniques. Further research could also explore women's textile design activities in southern China and the potential for using these as inspiration for design. In addition, the relationships between the textile traditions of the Miao and those textiles of the other Chinese ethnic peoples such as the Han, the Yao, and the Dong in southern China and southeast Asia could be explored. Systematic investigation should also be conducted on dyeing and weaving techniques of the Miao and other ethnic peoples in China.

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CHRONOLOGICAL CHART OF CHINESE DYNASTIES

NEOLITHIC PERIOD	? - 1766 B.C.
XIA	c2100 - c1600 B.C.
SHANG	c1600 - c1100 B.C.
ZHOU	c1100 - 256 B.C.
Western Zhou	c1100 - 771 B.C.
Eastern Zhou	770 - 256 B.C.
QIN	221 - 207 B.C.
HAN	206 B.C.- A.D. 220
THREE KINGDOMS	220 - 265
JIN	256 - 420
NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN DYNASTIES	420 - 589
SUI	581 - 618
TANG	618 - 907
FIVE DYNASTIES	907 - 960
SONG	960 - 1279
LIAO	916 - 1125
JIN	1115 - 1234
YUAN	1271 - 1368
MING	1368 - 1644
QING	1644 - 1911

Appendix. A brief chronology of China (After "Richly Woven Traditions: Costumes of the Miao of Southwest China and Beyond" by T. Reilly, 1987, p. 64)